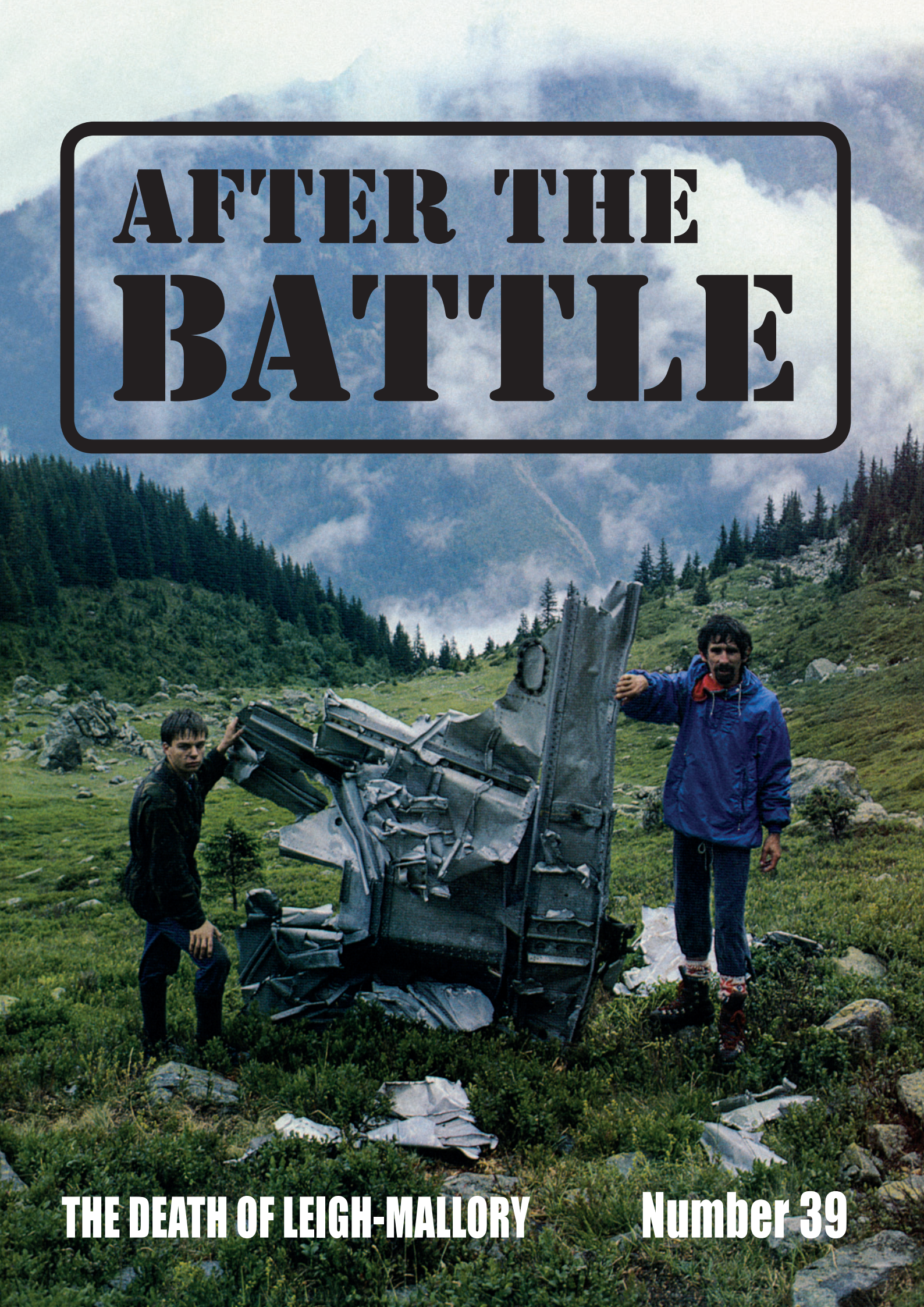
AFTER THE BATTLE



THE DEATH OF LEIGH-MALLORY

Number 39

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Front Cover: The largest section remaining from the Avro York in which Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory lost his life in November 1944 in the French Alps. This piece lies several hundred yards from the main impact position.

Centre Pages: In response to several readers' requests (see page 50/51), this is the restored Churchill AVRE at Graye-sur-Mer. Refer also to issues No. 15, page 48 and No. 25, page 28.

Back Cover: Last resting place amid the mountains for Sir Trafford and Lady Doris Mallory and their crew at le Rivier d'Allemont.

Acknowledgments:
The Editor would like to extend his appreciation to M. Roland Maire and M. Michel Chaintreuil for their assistance in France with the story on ACM Leigh-Mallory.

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THE DEATH OF AIR CHIEF MARSHAL LEIGH-MALLORY

BY DENIS C. BATEMAN

Air Chief Marshal Lord Dowding with Trafford Leigh-Mallory — then an Air Marshal — at the parade held at Fighter Command Headquarters to mark the third anniversary of the Battle of Britain.

In November 1944, Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory was reaching the pinnacle of his career. In January of that year he had been made a substantive Air Marshal and seven months later had come promotion to Temporary Air Chief Marshal. Almost two years before, on New Year's Day 1943, Leigh-Mallory had been appointed a Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath (KCB) and for the past year had successfully commanded the Allied Expeditionary Air Force, leading it through the early months of the invasion of Europe. Leigh-Mallory, at the age of fifty-two, could feel well pleased with the way the latter part of his career was unfolding. The war in Europe was progressing well and the powers-that-be had now given him overall command of the Allied Air Forces in south-east Asia.

A man of great self-confidence, even in some eyes, of conceit; ruthlessly determined, sparing neither himself nor anyone else in the pursuit of his objective, he could look forward to even greater attainments in the winning of the war against the Japanese Empire. At the end of the First World War the victorious British leaders had received peerages and substantial monetary rewards. Even in the less idolatrous age of the middle 'forties he could perhaps expect some recompense from a grateful nation for his part in bringing the conflict to a successful conclusion. A peerage, a colonial governorship or failing those, a directorship (probably more than one) of an important and thriving City company could be his. If he stayed in the RAF a top level appointment would seem to be assured, followed by modest riches and a comfortable retirement.

However, on the morning of Tuesday, November 14, 1944, it is doubtful whether any of these thoughts were in his mind as Leigh-Mallory and his wife, Doris, sat in the unheated interior of Avro York MW126 as it fought its way over France through snow and ice en route to its first stopping point at Pomigliano, Naples, on the journey to India. Unknown to passengers and crew, all ten people on board had little time left in this world. For Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory, KCB, DSO, intent on taking over his new command, destiny had arranged instead an appointment with death.

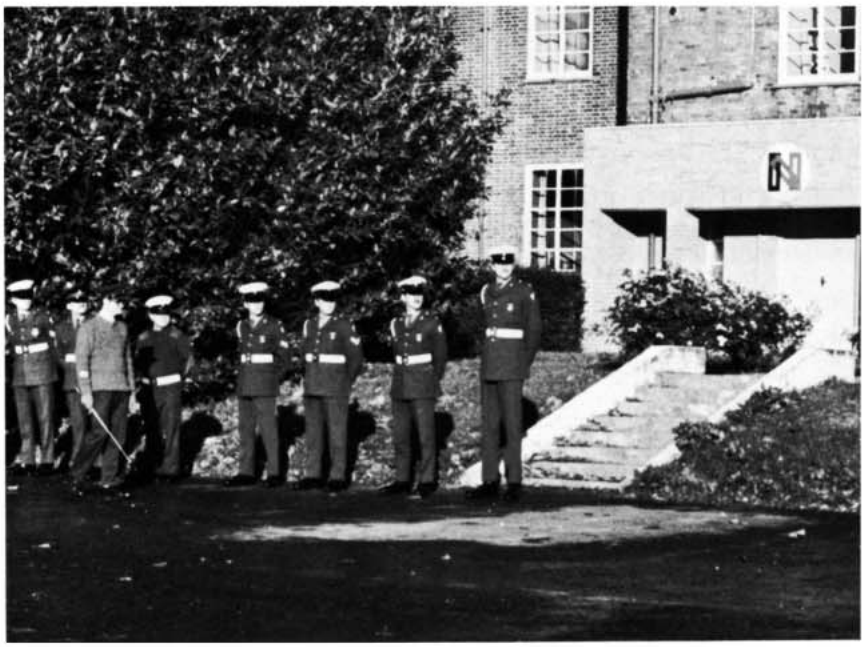
RAF Debden was taken over by the US Eighth Air Force in September 1942 although operations did not commence from there until March 1943. Here Air Marshal Leigh-Mallory takes the salute with Brigadier General Frank O'D. Hunter, Commander Eighth Fighter Command, in this picture released by the US Army censor on February 26, 1943.

PRELUDE

Trafford Leigh-Mallory was born on July 11, 1892, at Mobberley, Cheshire, the younger son of the Reverend and Mrs. Herbert Leigh Mallory. The Mallorys (the hyphen was added later) had been squire parsons at Mobberley for generations, not only having the living there but also the manorial rights of the parish. The young Trafford was educated at Haileybury and Magdalene College, Cambridge, where he took third class honours in history and law. His older brother, George, was to become well-known as a mountaineer and made three attempts at climbing Everest. He was in the preliminary survey party in 1921, taking part in the actual climb in the following year and reaching a height of 26,985ft. Two years later he and A. C. Irvine, a young climber from Oxford, made the second of two attempts at conquering the then-unconquerable mountain. They slept overnight at 26,000ft and were last seen going well about 800ft below the summit before being swallowed up in cloud never to reappear. It is a strange coincident that both brothers should be claimed by mountains, albeit in different countries and varying circumstances.

Two days after the outbreak of war on August 4, 1914, the 22-year-old Trafford enlisted as a private in the 10th Battalion, King's (Liverpool) Regiment. One month later he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the 4th Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers, going with them to France, and it was whilst on leave from the Front that he married Doris Jean Sawyer on August 19, 1915; she was to share his life for almost thirty years before sharing his death.

In 1916, after a course of instruction, he was seconded to the Royal Flying Corps, serving in France with No. 5 Squadron, and from November 1917, commanding No. 8 Squadron. He was awarded the DSO on January 1, 1919, one day after being mentioned in despatches and in August of that year was appointed to a permanent commission in the tiny post-war Royal Air Force, at the same time relinquishing his Army commission.



Since September 1975 an army barracks, men of the 13th/18th Hussars fall in for parade outside the NAAFI block.

The period between the two world wars saw Leigh-Mallory steadily climbing the ladder of his chosen profession. In 1922, he attended a Senior Officers' Course at Woking, followed the next year by duty in the Department of the Chief of the Air Staff at the Air Ministry. A course at the RAF Staff College from May 1925 to March 1926 preceded his command of

the School of Army Co-operation, Old Sarum, during which time he received the appreciation of the Army Council for his work there. By this time he was a Wing Commander and on January 1, 1930, he was seconded to the (Army) Staff College at Camberley as an instructor. However, in the summer of 1931, he was back at the Air Ministry as Deputy Director of Staff Duties. Promotion to Group Captain followed on January 1, 1932, then two years later he attended a course at the Imperial Defence College before taking command of No. 2 Flying Training School. In November 1935, Leigh-Mallory was posted to HQ Iraq as Senior Air Staff Officer, two months later being promoted to Air Commodore.

Back in England in 1937, he became Air Officer Commanding (AOC), No. 12 Group in Fighter Command and was promoted to Air Vice-Marshal in November 1938. It was whilst in command of this Group during the Battle of Britain that Leigh-Mallory was involved in the 'Big Wing' controversy. With Squadron Leader Douglas Bader as instigator and ally, he opposed the tactical policy of Air Vice-Marshal Keith Park, the AOC of No. 11 Group, then bearing the brunt of the battle. Briefly, Bader's contention was that large formations of fighters, four or five squadrons strong, — the 'Big Wings' — could take off from their respective airfields and rendezvous at an arranged position before engaging the enemy. In this he was backed by Leigh-Mallory who criticised Park's handling of his own squadrons suggesting that they were flung piecemeal into action. Meanwhile, Bader had achieved no little success as leader of the 'Duxford Wing' and had expounded his views on tactics to no less a personage than the Under Secretary-of-State for Air when he had visited Duxford. Park naturally resented the criticism aimed at him and his stand was supported by Sir Hugh Dowding, the austere Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Fighter Command. In their view No. 11 Group with little warning of impending attacks, had barely time to 'scramble' one or two squadrons whereas No. 12 Group, situated to the north of its neighbour, was able to get its squadrons into the air and formate on the leader before attacking the raiders en masse. The outcome was that Park and Dowding were replaced respectively by Leigh-Mallory and Sholto Douglas, the Deputy Chief of the Air Staff, who had also registered his approval of the Leigh-Mallory—Bader tactics. About this time Leigh-Mallory was appointed a Commander of the Order of the Bath and mentioned in despatches.

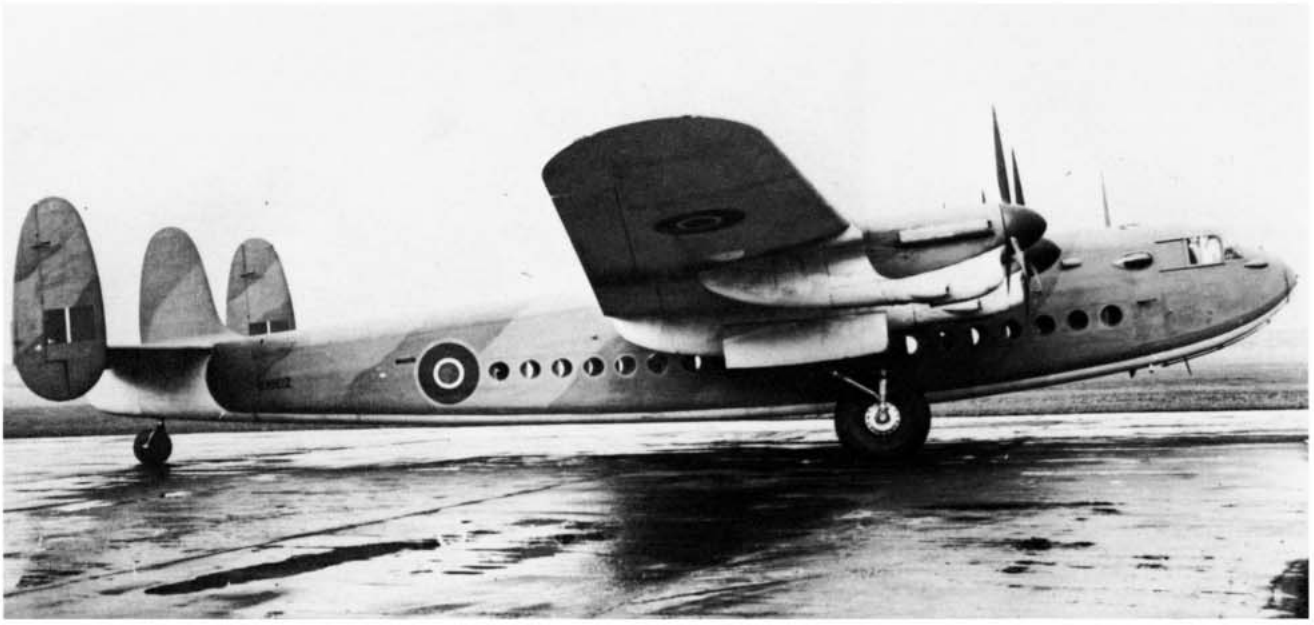
In November 1942, Sholto Douglas moved on and Leigh-Mallory became AOC-in-C of Fighter Command having been promoted to Acting Air Marshal short months before. No doubt he felt that his appointment and promotion entirely justified his operational tactics and he would have been less than human not to have done so. While 1942 was a dark year for Britain, lightening only towards the end with the offensive at El Alamein, for Leigh-Mallory it had been one of achievement culminating in advancement in the Order of the Bath to Knight Commander on January 1, 1943.

During 1943 Fighter Command went over to the offensive, taking the war into enemy-occupied skies and attacking ground targets with devastating accuracy. On November 15, Leigh-Mallory was appointed Air Commander-in-Chief, Allied Expeditionary Air Force (AEAF) and three weeks later, on December 5, was promoted to Acting Air Chief Marshal. As commander of the AEAF he was responsible for the subjugation of the Luftwaffe and for pressurising the German ground defences and communications in preparation for the invasion of Europe. In these tasks he was outstandingly successful and by the autumn of 1944, when the Allied Air Command was being reorganised, Leigh-Mallory was chosen to take command of the Allied Air Forces in south-east Asia.

August 1944. Lady Doris Leigh-Mallory congratulates the winner of one of the WAAF events at a sports meeting held at Headquarters Air Defence of Great Britain at Bentley Priory, located on the north-western outskirts of London.

Just prior to leaving Europe on November 3, he was one of two senior officers to be decorated by General Eisenhower in Paris. Both officers, the other was Sir Arthur Harris, AOC-in-C, Bomber Command, were made Chief Commanders of the (US) Legion of Merit conferred on them by President Roosevelt.

The Air Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Expeditionary Air Force chats to American pilots at their unidentified forward aerodrome in Normandy.



Air Chief Marshal Leigh-Mallory was appointed Air Commander for South-East Asia in August 1944 under the Supreme Commander Lord Louis Mountbatten. MW102 *(pictured above)* **was Mountbatten's personal aircraft — a similar York MW126 was made available to Leigh-Mallory for his journey to Kandy, Ceylon (IWM).**

It was during August 1944 that Leigh-Mallory was first notified that he was taking over as Air Commander in South-East Asia Command and soon after he began selecting the crew for his personal aircraft. Originally, Leigh-Mallory had wanted to take his own Dakota with a Mosquito as a back-up aircraft but during October he was offered York MW126 which he accepted. This aircraft belonged to No. 511 Squadron based at Lyneham in Wiltshire, and was practically new, having made only one overseas flight before being taken over by Leigh-Mallory. It was considered 'a good aircraft'.

For his personal pilot Leigh-Mallory was offered the choice of two officers, both picked by the 'P' (Personnel) Staff of HQ Coastal Command, whose brief Service records were forwarded to him by Air Chief Marshal Sir Sholto Douglas, now the AOC-in-C of Coastal Command. Both candidates were Flight Lieutenants, both had been educated at Cambridge University, and both were, of course, excellent pilots. However there the similarity ended. One, Flight Lieutenant C. G. D. Lancaster, DFC and Bar, was 32-years-old, had an engineering degree and 2,045 flying hours to his credit on Harts, Audaxes, Wapitis, Dominies and Sunderlands, as well as training aircraft. He had joined the RAF Reserve in 1935, had been commissioned into the RAFVR in 1939 and was presently serving with No. 228 Squadron flying Sunderlands with 720 hours on his current tour. The other, Flight Lieutenant V. E. Camacho, Royal Canadian Air Force, of No. 59 Squadron, was a 25-year-old barrister with 1,650 flying hours, 440 of which were on his present tour on Liberators. He was the son of Sir Maurice Camacho, Chief Justice of British Guiana, and had been recommended for a DFC which was subsequently awarded. Apart from Liberators he was an experienced pilot of Hudsons and Venturas.

On September 2, 1944, Flight Lieutenant Charles Gordon Drake Lancaster was interviewed by Leigh-Mallory at HQ AEAF and chosen as his personal pilot. Other crew members were then selected. These were: Flight Lieutenant Peter Chinn, Leigh-Mallory's personal assistant who would have flown the Mosquito had it been allocated, as 2nd pilot; Flight Lieutenant Keith Alan Mooring, navigator; Flight Lieutenant John Austral Casey, Royal Australian Air Force, wireless operator; Flying Officer Alfred John Enser, flight engineer; Corporal John Ellis Morton Burgess, fitter; Leading Aircraftman John Chalmers Burnett, fitter; and Sergeant Harold John Chandler, steward.

M class P. with F. Trans Guard.

Type of Aircraft	Mark	R.A.F. Number
YORK C	I	M.W. 126

Contractor	Contract No.	Engine installed :—
A.V. Roe Woodford	A/C 2429/C4 A	Merlin 22
		Maker's airframe No. :—

Unit or Cat'y/Cause	Station or Contractor	Date	Authority	41 or 43 Gp. Allot.
1·9·44	511 Sqdn	6/9	30/12 A	4.16/1860
11·9·44	24 Sqdn	13/9	98/P	
30·9·44	511 Sqdn	1/10	41/DA	
31·10·44	R.A.F. Northolt.	6/11	376/D.	
	CAT E(mining) FB.	10/11.	P.M.2 5514/44	

A.M. Form 78

The original aircraft record card now preserved at the Air Historical Branch, London.

Lancaster, Mooring and Casey, all of No. 228 Squadron, were considered by their Commanding Officer to be his most efficient crew. Lancaster had previously served in India before being posted to Coastal Command; he had been awarded his DFC in May 1944 and the Bar to the decoration three months later. Mooring was No. 228 Squadron's bombing leader and had already been crewed with Lancaster. Casey had been the squadron signals leader and was an expert wireless operator on Marconi sets as carried in Yorks. He was trained in the use of radar and had completed two years on Sunderlands. He was not conversant with the interior layout of the York. Enser, the flight engineer, was the only crew member to join at Lyneham, having been serving with No. 511 Squadron prior to posting. He had also been a leader and was very experienced on York aircraft; in fact, while on his York conversion course at Lyneham just before the flight, Lancaster, who had no previous experience of the aircraft, was advised to leave the handling of the engines entirely to Enser. Unfortunately, little is known of the other members of the crew apart from the fact that Flight Lieutenant Chinn had been an operational pilot in No. 2 Group before becoming Leigh-Mallory's personal assistant.

What of the aircraft itself? The Avro York had been designed and flown in 1942 and since that time only a small number had entered RAF service, mainly as VIP aircraft, one of which, LV633, had been allocated for the use of Winston Churchill and was named 'Ascalon'. Built as a long-range transport aircraft with a maximum permissible all-up weight of 68,000lbs (reduced for Northolt aircraft to 63,000lbs), it had a maximum speed of 298 mph at 21,00ft, with a cruising speed of 233 mph at 15,000ft. Its range was 2,700 miles.

Leigh-Mallory's York, MW126, carried standard wireless equipment for its type plus a VHF R/T set, an air position indicator and air mileage unit; normal magnetic and distance reading compasses and a loop aerial, together with dinghies and the usual safety equipment. The aircraft had been flown by Squadron Leader (as he now was) Lancaster during his conversion training at Lyneham (he had nine hours, forty minutes time on the York, of which four hours were solo), before the aircraft was brought to Northolt to be housed in the York Flight. Once there, no special precautions had been taken to safeguard it as the airfield was surrounded by a barbed wire fence and had only two entrances, both manned for twenty-four hours a day. The aircraft's fuselage door was also kept locked when no one was aboard.

Before moving to the fateful day it is as well to record one or two other pertinent facts. Towards the end of September 1944, General Eisenhower, Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force, had written to Sir Archibald Sinclair, the Secretary of State for Air, asking him to defer Leigh-Mallory's reassignment for about three weeks owing to the latter's involvement with 'a terrific battle' then being fought, and to this Sinclair concurred. However, on September 28, Lord Louis Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander, South-East Asia Command, signalled the Chief of the Air Staff, Sir Charles Portal, stating that both he and Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Peirse, whom Leigh-Mallory was relieving, felt that he should arrive as early as possible and preferably not later than November 1, although he went on to say that he did not want to interfere with Leigh-Mallory's well-earned leave. Eisenhower agreed to release him on October 10 and Leigh-Mallory, accepting a week's reduction in his leave, planned to depart from England on November 3 arriving in Kandy, Ceylon, four days later.

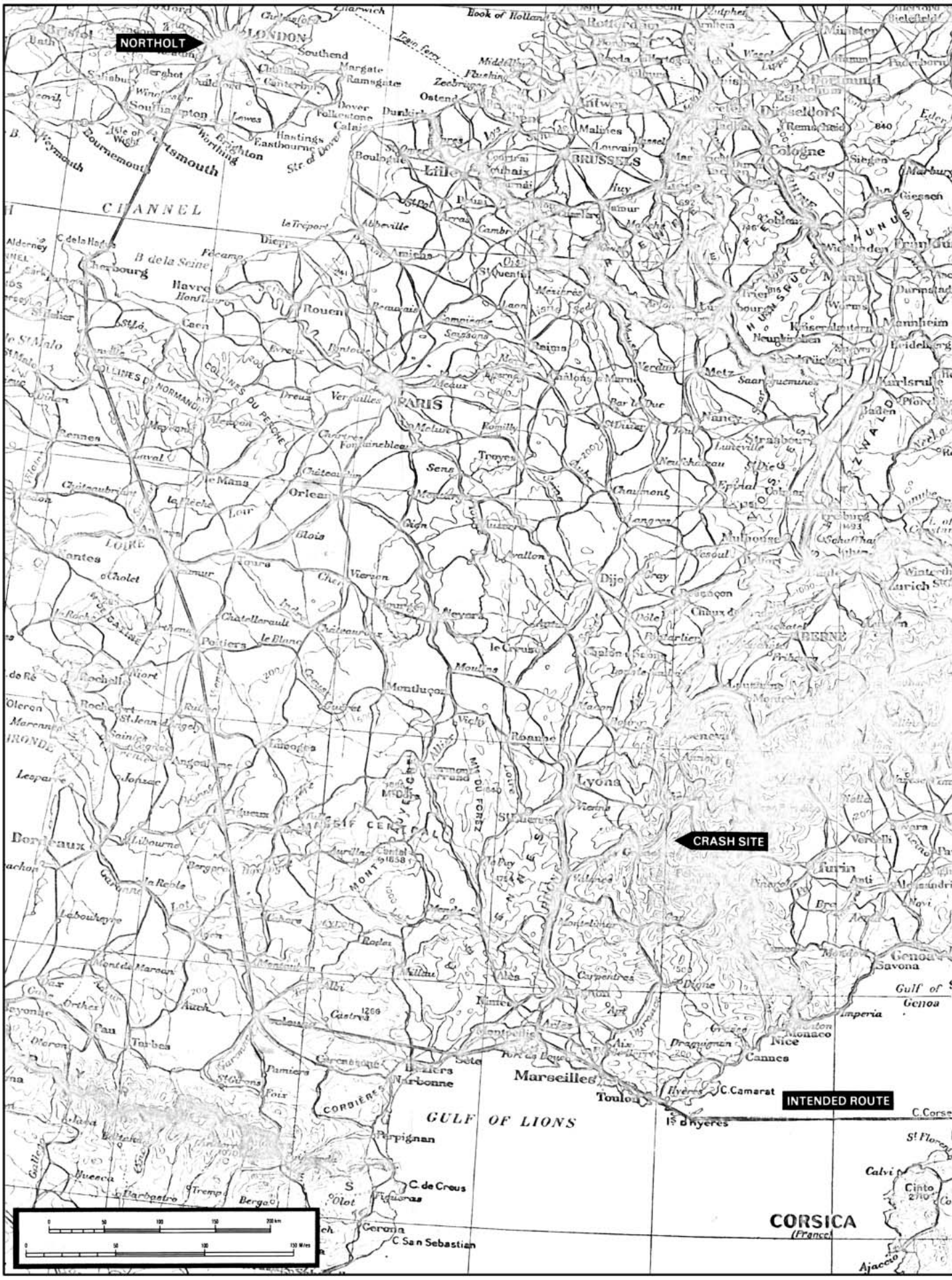
On October 4, Leigh-Mallory saw General Sir Alan Brooke the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, who told him that Operation Dracula, a major SEAC operation had been postponed, and in view of this Leigh-Mallory wrote to Portal asking for his full month's leave stating that 'it does not appear to me that there is such a great hurry for me to get out to Ceylon'. On October 12, Mountbatten concurred with the request and the new arrival date was set for November 15. Unfortunately, in the interim, Leigh-Mallory contracted bronchitis and his departure was postponed until November 14, his arrival date in Kandy being November 18.

On the evening of November 3, Squadron Leader Lancaster flew York MW126 from Lyneham to Northolt for modifications and 'special work' which commenced on November 8. This consisted of modifying the internal fittings and seating to Leigh-Mallory's own requirements, and certain modifications to the engines bringing them up to the latest Air Ministry standards were made. All four propellers and constant speed units were changed and the latest Lancaster Mark IV undercarriage and strengthened beams fitted. As one of the witnesses at the later Court of Inquiry stated, this 'materially increased the weight of the aircraft'. Other work included ground-testing the TKS de-icing equipment and an unserviceable master unit of the DR (Distant Reading) compass was replaced by a new one which was then tested. The compasses were swung under the direction of Flight Lieutenant Mooring and extra oxygen points, enough for twelve passengers and crew were fitted. The aircraft was flight-tested during the afternoon and found to be serviceable apart from a VHF defect and a minor air leak in the pneumatic system. Finally, the aircraft was weighed that evening and scaled 43,517lbs.

On Monday, November 13, the York was flown once more and reported to be in a serviceable condition although on neither occasion was it fully loaded. A final DI (Daily Inspection) was carried out; a complete oil change made, tappets checked and a new set of plugs fitted. All of this work was undertaken by men experienced in servicing Yorks and, in fact, who normally acted as instructors when re-equipping with this type of aircraft occurred. A member of the staff of the Royal Aircraft Establishment came from

Flight Lieutenant Peter Chinn, Leigh-Mallory's personal assistant, who doubled as second pilot on the flight.

One of the Air Chief Marshal's last public engagements before his departure. Here, on October 16, 1944, he is shown talking to Observer J. W. Reynolds of Coventry — one of ten Royal Observer Corps seaborne aircraft identifiers mentioned in despatches for their work in the Normandy beachhead. With Sir Trafford is Air Chief Marshal Sir Roderick Hill, in his old position as C-in-C Air Defence of Great Britain (IWM).


NORTHOLT
CRASH SITE
INTENDED ROUTE
CHANNEL
GULF OF LIONS
CORSICA
(France)
PARIS
BRUSSELS
Marseilles
Toulon
Nice
Cannes
Lyons
Turin
Genoa
Savona
Perpignan
Narbonne
Bordeaux
Rouen
Orleans
Dijon
Metz
Strasbourg
Cologne
Dusseldorf
Amiens
Lille
Ostend
Rotterdam
Amsterdam
Book of Holland
Dover
Folkestone
Ramsgate
Margate
Southend
Portsmouth
Southampton
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Biarritz
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B de la Seine
B de la Somme
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Bournemouth
Worthing
Str of Dover
Channel Ferry
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Vosges
Jura
Massif Central
Mont Dore
Puy de Dome
Cevennes
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Montpellier
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Sete
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Auch
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Lourdes
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Mont de Marsan
Arcachon
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Chatellerault
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Rochefort
Oleron
de Ré
Saintes
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Blida
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El Golea
Touggourt
Ouargla
Hassi Messaoud
Hassi R'Mel
Ain Sefra
Colomb Bechar
Beni Abbes
Adrar
Timimoun
Reggane
In Salah
Tamanrasset
In Guezzam
Tessalit
Gao
Timbuktu
Mopti
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Kuwait
Bahrein
Dhahran
Abu Dhabi
Muscat
Aden
Asmara
Khartoum
Port Sudan
Wadi Halfa
Aswan
Luxor
Hurghada
Sharm el Sheikh
Eilat
Beersheba
Tel Aviv
Haifa
Nazareth
Tiberias
Sea of Galilee
Dead Sea
Jericho
Bethlehem
Hebron
Nablus
Jenin
Tulkarm
Qalqilya
Ramallah
Jericho
Gulf of Suez
Gulf of Aqaba
Red Sea
Mediterranean Sea
Black Sea
Caspian Sea
Persian Gulf
Gulf of Oman
Arabian Sea
Indian Ocean
Bay of Bengal
Andaman Islands
Port Blair
Rangoon
Mandalay
Lashio
Kunming
Chungking
Chengtu
Lanchow
Sian
Yenan
Peking
Tientsin
Mukden
Harbin
Changchun
Kirin
Vladivostok
Khabarovsk
Blagoveshchensk
Chita
Irkutsk
Ulan Bator
Urga
Kobdo
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Rourkela
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Bilaspur
Korba
Ambikapur
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Rajahmundry
Vijayawada
Guntur
Ongole
Nellore
Madras
Pondicherry
Cuddalore
Tiruchirapalli
Madurai
Dindigul
Coimbatore
Salem
Erode
Tiruppur
Ooty
Mysore
Bangalore
Kolar
Hosur
Krishnagiri
Dharmapuri
Tirupattur
Vellore
Arcot
Chittoor
Tirupati
Kadapa
Kurnool
Nandyal
Adoni
Raichur
Gulbarga
Bidar
Aurangabad
Ahmednagar
Pune
Mumbai
Thane
Nasik
Dhule
Jalgaon
Bhusaval
Akola
Amravati
Wardha
Nagpur
Chandrapur
Gondia
Raipur
Durg
Bhilai
Rourkela
Sambalpur
Bilaspur
Korba
Ambikapur
Jagdalpur
Bastar
Kanker
Dhamtari
Mahasamund
Sarangarh
Jharsuguda
Talcher
Angul
Dhenkanal

HEADQUARTERS,
ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY AIR FORCE.
OFFICE OF THE AIR COMMANDER IN CHIEF.

2nd October, 1944.

My dear C.A.S.

Many thanks for your letter of 29th September. I saw Eisenhower yesterday and he has agreed to me leaving here on October 10th. I shall have to spend one or two days finally winding up affairs of A.E.A.F. when I get back to England, and am prepared to cut down my leave to three weeks. If I did not feel that I really wanted some leave, I would not take it, but I think it best from the point of my next job if I do have at any rate three weeks, when I shall take some exercise and get thoroughly fit.

All this will mean that I shall be ready to leave England on November 3rd and arrive in Kandy about November 7th.

Yours ever,
Trafford Leigh-Mallory

Marshal of the Royal Air Force, Sir Charles F.A. PORTAL,
G.C.B., D.S.O., M.C.

Air Ministry,
WHITEHALL,
London, S.W.1.

Farnborough to assist with the automatic controls and to make the modifications necessary for flying to the Far East. The controls were tested and the pilot declared his satisfaction with them. One, perhaps minor point, was that the York was not equipped with a windscreen wiper but instead was fitted with fluid de-icing equipment. The aircraft was refuelled with 1,860 gallons under the supervision of the flight engineer and cleaned before the loading of the previously-weighed baggage commenced. This was done by the pilot and flight engineer after the former had refused the offer of help from two loaders.

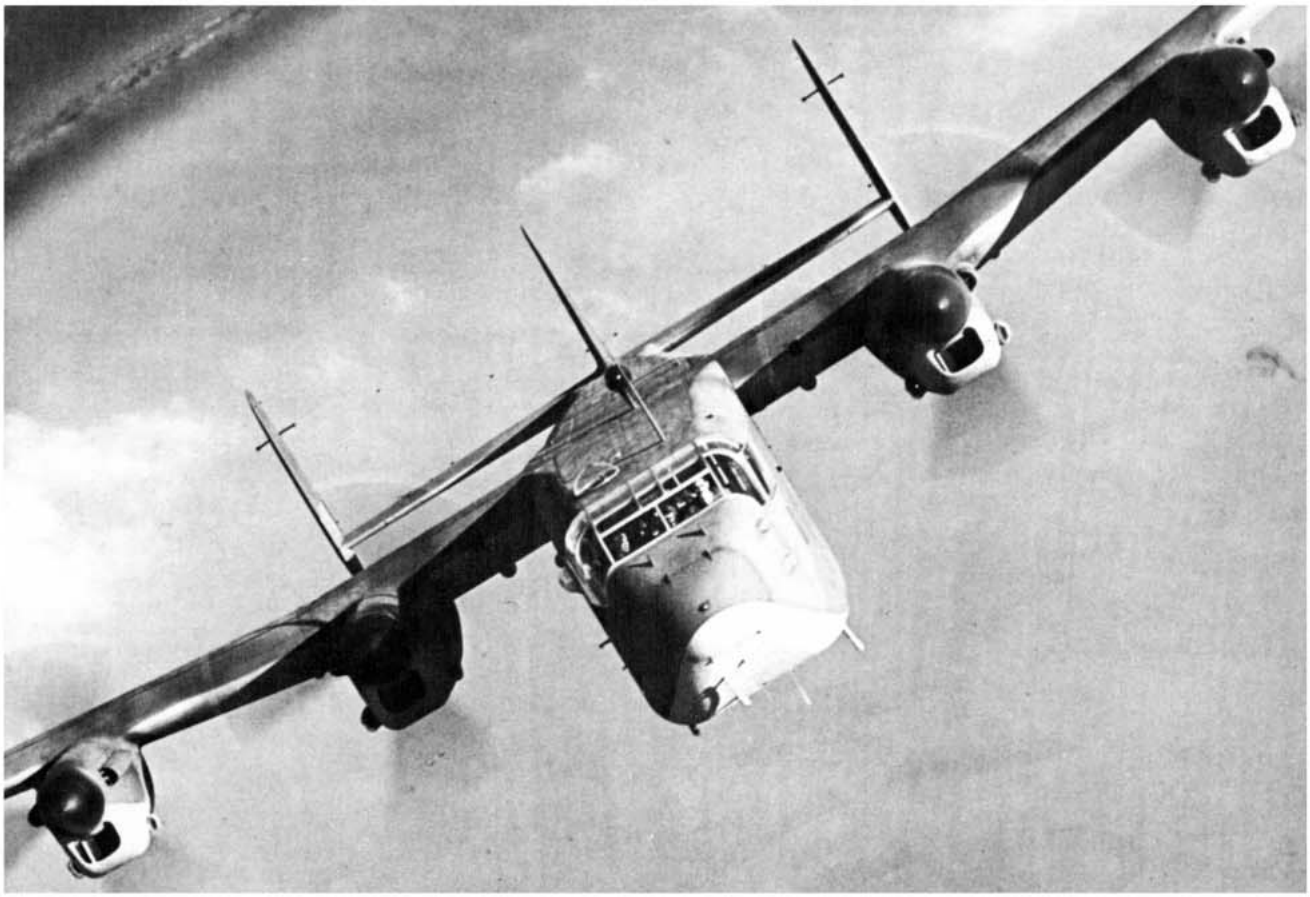
Three or four days before, Flight Lieutenant Chinn, Leigh-Mallory's personal assistant and 2nd pilot of the York, told Lancaster, the pilot, that his chief wanted 500 cartridges taken on board the aircraft. At this Lancaster was heard to complain that he did not want the additional weight, but as nothing more was heard of the incident it is assumed that this unusual cargo was taken.

On the evening of November 13, the crew was preliminary briefed for the flight at HQ, No. 116 Wing, responsible for special flights from the London area. Two or three weeks earlier they had been given a pre-preliminary briefing and emergency airfields, high ground, restricted areas and enemy-occupied territory were pointed out to them. A special warning was given regarding the proximity of Toulouse to the Pyrenees. The crew was also told not to use the IFF (Identification Friend or Foe) until latitude 45° north unless in distress; after reaching this latitude it was to be switched on and remain on until the destination was reached. The navigator, Flight Lieutenant Mooring, asked for a set of astronomical and navigational tables and a current Air Almanac and confirmed that he required nothing further; however, two Mark IXA sextant batteries were also provided. The wireless operator, Flight Lieutenant Casey, was also briefed and issued with an amended copy of Route Signals Instructions and a map of France and Italy showing all the radio aids on the route to Naples.

Whilst at Wing Headquarters a preliminary weather briefing was given by the Meteorological Officer who informed the crew that the cloud tops would be around 12,000ft and 15,000ft in showers. Any cumulo-nimbus cloud above freezing level was expected to hold a heavy, clear-ice formation. When Squadron Leader Lancaster asked if he would be over the top of the cloud at 17,000ft, he was told 'Generally, yes', but even if there was cloud at this height he would be above serious icing levels.

There is no record of Leigh-Mallory's movements on the day before the flight except that his personal clerk, Flight Sergeant Cyril Arthur Jolly, stated at the Court of Inquiry that he last saw him that night between 9.00 p.m. and 10.00 p.m.

The map from the Court of Inquiry file (AIR 16/404) which traces the intended fight path of Avro York MW126 on the first leg of the 5,500-odd mile journey to Ceylon. This was to take the aircraft from RAF Northolt, west of London, 1,120 nautical miles to Pomigliano, just east of Naples, Italy. In the event, the aircraft strayed some 250 miles off track.



THE FLIGHT

Weather conditions on the ground at Northolt on the morning of November 14 were not good, with showers of rain and corresponding low cloud. Flight Lieutenant Casey was given a final briefing and issued with Ferry Rekoh cards, Signal Books 0182 and 0220, and maps, and Route Signals Instructions were amended in accordance with the latest available information. Casey was also told that all the radio facilities on the route were reported to be serviceable. He was re-advised of the distress signals procedure with which he appeared to be fully conversant.

At 9.07 a.m. the York with its distinguished passengers took off normally from RAF Northolt and at 1,000ft joined the orbiting escort of eleven Spitfires under the leadership of Flight Lieutenant Ronald Wood of No. 313 Squadron, making voice contact by VHF. Ahead lay a journey of 1,120 nautical miles. Two minutes after take off No. 11 Group Filter Room picked up the track of the aircraft and began recording its flight, code-numbered A30T. This track continued until 9.51 a.m. when MW126 was passing to the east of Pointe de Barfleur at 6,000ft; at this position the tracing ceased, this being normal practice as an aircraft reached the French coast. Meanwhile, after contacting the escort, the York had climbed to 5,000ft on a course of approximately 180°, changing to a course of about 50° to starboard five or six minutes later, heading for Portsmouth. On sighting the coast it altered course 30° or 40° to port to cross Selsey Bill on a southerly course at about 180 mph. As the aircraft passed over this well-known landmark at 9.25 a.m., Squadron Leader Lancaster had the following message transmitted by VHF to the escort leader: 'Goodbye Fighter Command. Thank you for escort'. Flight Lieutenant Wood acknowledged the message and the escort broke away leaving MW126 to fly steadily on across the English Channel. At the Inquiry it was stated that at this time the York was flying 'just below a layer of cloud in clear air conditions' with some low cloud beneath it. The returning escort ran into 'very bad weather conditions and just managed to get into North Weald'. At Overseas Aircraft Control, Gloucester, a message was received at 10.30 a.m. in similar vein to the one transmitted to the escort leader: 'Goodbye Fighter Command. Many thanks escort'. This was the last message received from the aircraft but the escorting Spitfire pilots were not the last to see the York which was by now flying slowly across northern France.

At about 10.00 a.m. Flight Lieutenant George Frederick Acock, piloting a Dakota of No. 24 Squadron, travelling from Lyneham to Naples, sighted a York about 1,500 yards away on his port side and flying on a southerly course. The Dakota's position was given as 48° 30' north, 01° 06' west, by which reckoning the two aircraft were near the town of Coutances in Normandy. Flight Lieutenant Acock's mental reaction on seeing the York was that it was 'probably in the freezing level' although he also noted that it was flying normally with none of its engines feathered. The weather by this time was bad enough for him to decide to turn back. As he did so he caught another glimpse of the York through the heavily-falling snow and thick cloud which, according to him, had an indeterminate base of about 1,000ft. This was the last 'officially accepted' sighting of the York before the crash. Flight Lieutenant Acock's description of conditions at this time show that freezing rain was falling at 1,500ft and, while attempting to climb above the storm, he estimated the cloud tops at almost 18,000ft, cloud which he described as 'towering cumulus'. His cockpit temperature was reading minus 40°C and one can only wonder and surmise at the awful journey that the passengers and crew of MW126 were experiencing in their lumbering, unheated, uncomfortable aircraft.

Flight Lieutenant Acock's navigator on this trip was Flying Officer A. A. Livemore who for the past eighteen months had been engaged on ferrying and transport flights to North Africa and the Middle East. In his opinion, the weather conditions met with on the morning of November 14 were the worst he had ever experienced.

While Flight Lieutenant Acock's sighting was accepted as the last, it must also be stated that an unidentified pilot and crew of a C47 reported seeing a large aircraft which they failed to identify, circling round, apparently lost or in difficulties, below the cloud base of 1,000ft. According to the pilot, this sighting was made at approximately 12.00 noon about eighteen miles south of Poitiers, which was directly on the planned route of MW126. This evidence was discarded by the Court of Inquiry 'as identification was too indefinite' and in the light of later evidence of the crash it would appear that they were correct in their assessment.

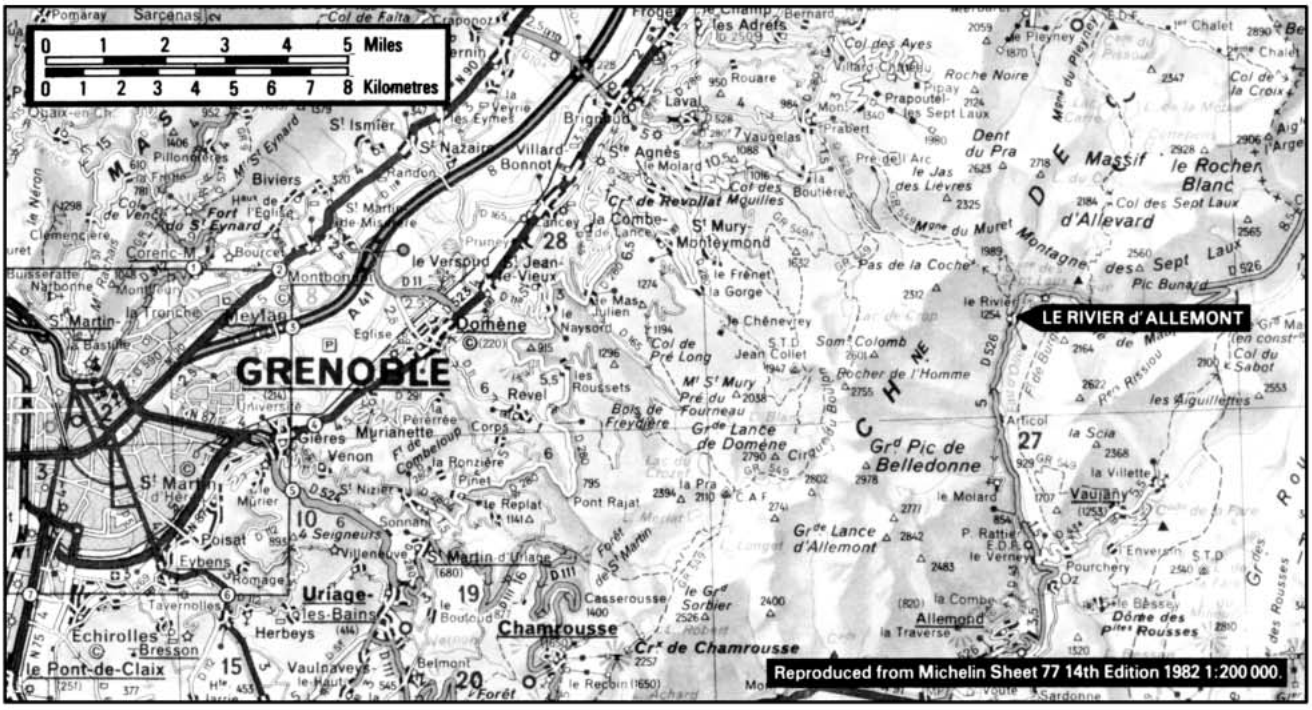
During the morning of November 14, the duty controller at Overseas Aircraft Control received several messages from aircraft turning back or landing at intermediate airfields because of bad weather on their routes. One of these aircraft which landed at Rennes instead of flying on to Naples was piloted by Squadron Leader Harry Spencer Grimsey, DFC, of No. 24 Squadron based at Hendon. He took off from Lyneham in a Dakota about half-an-hour after MW126 had left Northolt on a virtually identical route. In about the same area where Acock had sighted the York, Grimsey ran into 10/10ths cloud at 500ft with rain and snow falling, whereupon he climbed to 5,000ft but was still in cloud. Climbing higher to 7,800ft the cloud persisted, the aircraft flying into snow and sleet followed by freezing rain which formed as clear ice on the windscreen, fuselage and propellers. The windscreen iced up despite the wiper and alcohol spray and Grimsey was forced to switch off the wiper to prevent it breaking. The speed of the aircraft dropped from 138 mph to 110 mph, so revs and boost

were increased. To rid himself of the ice Grimsey made a reciprocal turn and descended to 2,500 ft (his safety height) where he was still in cloud. At 10.27 a.m. he broke cloud and flew into a gap over the Loire still losing height; he was below 1,500ft before the icing disappeared. Eventually, after trying to land at Le Mans, then setting course for a return to Lyneham, he decided to land at Rennes through another gap in the clouds. On his outward flight he had looked up through another break in the clouds and making a very rough guess estimated that the cloud ceiling was 20,000ft. This was more or less confirmed by the Meteorological Officer at HQ Fighter Command who stated at the Inquiry that the tops of the cloud extended above 15,000ft.

One other indication of the atrocious conditions met with over France that morning was given by Wing Commander Edward Walpole Whitaker, DFC, AFC, Officer Commanding No. 511 Squadron, who had also taken off from Lyneham in York MW130 on November 14, to fly to Naples although several hours earlier. After about an hour's flying his windscreen iced over and he flew virtually blind for the next hour-and-a-half, collecting ice on the spinners and radiator scoops. Daylight found him just west of Marseilles flying 'just below a sheet of stratus with cumulus cloud going into it'. He reduced height from 8,000ft to 1,000ft at which height he flew the rest of the journey. Whilst over France he had 'experienced heavy static and considerable sparking over the windscreen'; although using the wireless the operator was unable to make contact with the ground and could only raise 'a continuous crackle through the static'. However, fifteen minutes before reaching the south coast of France he obtained a loop bearing. Wing Commander Whitaker was able to continue his journey and landed safely at Naples. In giving evidence to the Court of Inquiry he made two significant points: the first, when commenting on the capabilities of Squadron Leader Lancaster, he had advised him to get more practice before the flight to India and also to delay the trip if he possibly could in order to make a long cross-country flight. Second, he concluded his evidence by stating that he was sure that he could have avoided the icing conditions had his flight across France been carried out in daylight.

With a map of France in front of him, peering out of the window of his personal aircraft, it would have been conceivable to have been able to caption this photograph as being taken on the last flight — found in a camera at the scene of the crash. In reality it shows Sir Trafford en route to confer with General Montgomery at his Creuilly Chateau HQ in Normandy (IWM).

Some twelve miles east of Grenoble the Le Ferrouillet mountains reach up to 8,500ft. Travelling in a north or north-westerly direction, i.e. completely opposite to its scheduled track, the York hit the range at an altitude of 6,700ft at the position indicated.

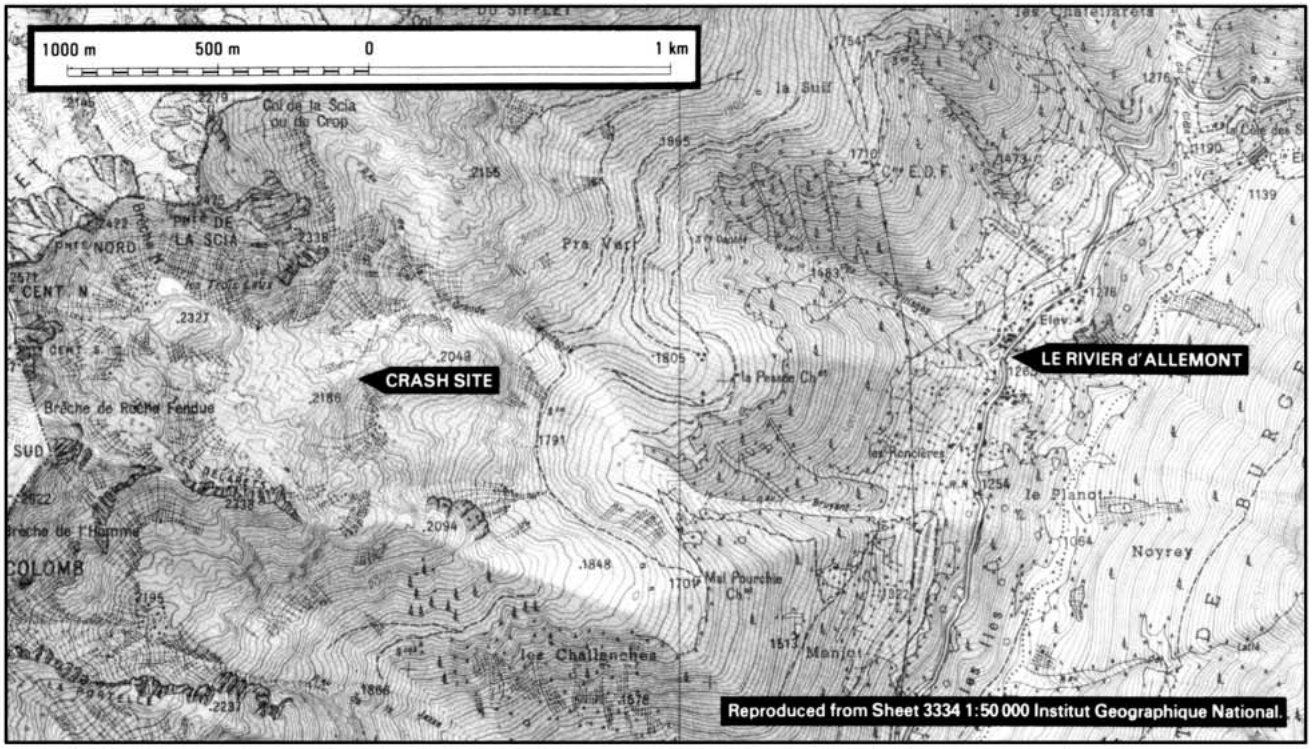

0 1 2 3 4 5 Miles
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Kilometres
GRENOBLE
LE RIVIER d'ALLEMONT
Reproduced from Michelin Sheet 77 14th Edition 1982 1:200 000.

MISSING

The first indication that something was amiss came in a signal from Pomigliano, where the York should have landed at 2.07 p.m. Timed at 3.50 p.m. that afternoon, the signal requested news of the aircraft. This naturally started a whole flurry of signals involving SHAEF, HQ Mediterranean Allied Air Forces, Overseas Aircraft Control, 1st and 2nd Tactical Air Forces HQ, No. 302 Transport Wing, IX Troop Carrier Command, Ninth USAAF, Communications Zone and the Air Ministry. Also informed was the Air/Sea Rescue organisation.

Searches were organised and carried out by the commands through whose airspace the aircraft should have travelled. SHAEF initiated action by requesting 2TAF to make a search thirty miles each side of the route with a detailed search in the area St. Lo-Poitiers and a rough search in the Toulouse-Sete area followed by another detailed search from Marseilles to Sete; actions which were all prevented by bad weather. Strangely however, they were not due to commence until 8.00 a.m. on November 16 — almost forty-eight hours after the York's take off from Northolt and more than forty hours after the first signal requesting news of the aircraft had been sent. The following day (November 17) twelve Dakotas searched between St. Lo and Poitiers, while three more Dakotas covered Poitiers to Marseilles; these flights were continued by the same aircraft for the next three days. On the last day, twenty Dakotas searched the area Clermont — Lyon — Seziers — Istres and from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic along the Pyrenees in a strip forty miles wide. On November 22, this area was again searched by twenty-one Dakotas, but this was the final day as bad weather prevented any further searches being carried out. In all, 101 aircraft had searched 61,500 miles for six days. Aircraft belonging to the French Forces of the Interior were also enlisted in the quest for the York and covered an extensive area. A dawn to dusk search on November 16 by aircraft based in southern France was carried out from Aix-en-Provence to Corsica, Sardinia, Rome and Naples and all shipping and aircraft within the route of the York were warned to look out for signs of it. Finally, on November 26, all searches were abandoned.

Grenoble lies 130 miles to the north of the easterly leg from Toulouse in the intended flight plan.



Le Rivier d'Allemont, perched on a mountainside. Until November 14, 1944 it was just another place on the map with nothing to make it any more special than a thousand other hamlets in France. With towering mountain ranges all around (the Sept Laux of the Massif d'Allevard are in the misty background) the York flew close to the village in a raging snowstorm to crash some two kilometres to the west (out of the photo to the left).

DISASTER IN THE FRENCH ALPS

On November 14, 1944, in the tiny hamlet of le Rivier d'Allemont, situated to the east of Grenoble in the Department of Istres, a snowstorm was raging. The hamlet was 1,265 metres above sea level and located in the Sept Laux mountains. The inhabitants — typical French peasants — were going about their business, mainly indoors, when, soon after midday, the sound of aircraft engines was heard above the noise of the howling wind.

On hearing the aircraft, Seraphin Mathieu, who lived in Allemont and worked at the local electricity station, went to the door of his home. To him the sound appeared to be travelling from the Belledonne mountain range to Sept Laux, that is from south to north. Just after passing over the hamlet Monsieur Mathieu heard an explosion and the sound of the aircraft's engines ceased, leaving him to conclude that the aircraft had struck one of the nearby mountains.

Jean Souchon, the 57-year-old keeper at the Water Company of Olle, was also at home in Allemont. He thought that the time was about 12 noon when he heard the aircraft flying at full speed towards Sept Laux in a southerly to northerly direction. He thought that its altitude was about 500 metres above the hamlet. He heard the aircraft pass over, then 'a much louder humming, then nothing'. He went on, 'snow was falling abundantly at that time and the fog was very dense'. He believed that the aircraft had struck the mountain 'nearly opposite the room of electric storing of Monvoisin'.

In the kitchen of his home was Francois Vicarini aged twenty-three, a cowkeeper at Monvoisin. He thought that the time was 12.40 p.m. when he first heard 'the humming of an airplane motor'. It was snowing hard with dense fog when he went outside and at that moment he heard the engine 'rapidly accelerate and, at the same minute, a crashing noise, then complete silence'. He was certain that the aircraft had struck the southern slope of the Cheminee du Diable (Devil's Chimney),

One of a series of photographs taken for the investigating team in June 1945. Note the tiny arrow, made from strips of dingy cloth, below the cliff indicating the direction of the crash site.

The wreckage was not discovered until June 1945 when Seraphin Mathieu climbed up this valley. The snow was beginning to melt revealing the shattered aircraft, its passengers and crew. The wreckage was scattered from the top right in the photo, where it impacted beneath the tree, down to the where the members of the investigating party are standing in the snow. As Le Rivier was situated in the American sphere, notification of the discovery was passed by the local Gendarmerie to the American detachment in Grenoble. The US Army Eastern Command DELTA Base Section Executive Officer, Captain Elkan F. Solomon in turn reported the fact to the district headquarters at Lyon. After having checked out the crash site personally, Captain Solomon returned to his office to telephone his findings to SHAEF FORWARD HQ at Reims. The top secret confirming signal from Air Chief Marshal Arthur Teddar, passing the news to the Air Ministry in London, is reproduced overleaf.

a mountain over 6,000ft high in the Sept Laux chain, near Venitier.

Albert Pin, a 17-year-old farmer worker from La Ferriere, heard 'an airplane humming from Sept Laux or Pleynet' but could not be more exact because of the bad weather. He thought he heard an explosion but again could not be sure.

At about 7.00 p.m. that evening Willem Matthey, a 55-year-old mechanic at the Ste Force et Lumiere a Fond de France, living in the commune of La Ferriere, was told by the company director that an aircraft had struck the mountain. Afterwards, while Monsieur Matthey was watching the mountains, he saw a flame about a metre high from the direction of Lac Carre in the Massif d'Allevard to the north of Allemont. He enlisted the help of Alphonse Uguhetto, a 31-year-old machinist, and Florimond Jeanton, twenty-nine, a 'factory watcher', both from La Ferriere, and together they climbed some 7,700ft to try to discover the source of the flame. Thick snow covered the region and the storm was still blowing and eventually the three men had to give up and return.

At 3.00 p.m. that afternoon the telephone rang in the Gendarmerie post of Bourg d'Oisans. On the line was Mme. Chatel, a cafe owner in Rivier d'Allemont, informing First Quartermaster Georges Rouvier and Gendarme Max Mercerolle that an unknown 'airplane' had 'struck against' the Sept Laux mountains. The gendarmes set out for Allemont but because of deep snow and avalanches on the way did not arrive until 4.00 p.m. the following day. At the hamlet they took statements from those residents who had heard the aircraft then the next day (16th), with the aid of binoculars, they scanned the mountainside without success. From the information they had received the gendarmes concluded that the aircraft had crashed in the avalanche corridor and would now be hidden by snow; as there was little more they could do Rouvier and Mercerolle returned to their post at Bourg d'Oisans.

At the Allevard Brigade post of the Gendarmerie Nationale, a call was received from the Bourg d'Oisans post at 4.00 p.m. on November 14 informing them that an aircraft of unknown nationality had crashed in the Sept Laux mountains. A telephone call was put through to the factory of Fond de France asking for any information they might have but it was not until 10.00 p.m. that the first vague news reached them. At 4.00 p.m. the following day Chef Jean Pinel and Gendarmes Charles Schultz, Jean Giroud and Paul Robert went to the Fond de France where, after speaking with the director, they took the 'telepherique' to the Sept Laux range. The snowstorm was still blowing hard and not being equipped for the task the police would not attempt such a hazardous climb. A rescue group was organised but fared no better as the snow was more than 7ft deep and avalanches barred their way.

The gendarmes returned to La Ferriere and proceeded to take statements from Matthey, Uguhetto and Jeanton before returning to their post where, oddly enough, a telephone message from the Gendarmerie at Bourg d'Oisans awaited them informing them that the crashed aircraft 'had been found on the territory of their district'. (The original French text has been verified in case the translation was suspect and no explanation can be given as to why the message was sent as at this time no one had actually seen the York or knew of its true position. One possible explanation is that this aircraft was French as it is known that a French aircraft had also crashed in the area about this time although few details are recorded in Air Ministry files.)

Sometime during November 15, an American military police patrol, under the command of First Lieutenant Nicholas Luca, Provost Marshal of Grenoble, was told by the French police that a crashed aircraft was located in the Sept Laux mountains. The patrol immediately set out to investigate, but like the Gendarmerie, not being properly equipped, had to give up the hunt. However, upon returning to their headquarters a four-man squad, suitably attired and equipped, started out to comb the area. After an extensive search during which the squad encountered avalanches, snow, fog and impassable terrain, they returned convinced that the aircraft was completely covered with snow. A visual search was also carried out through field-glasses but without success.

Jean Paul Pallud's remarkable comparison photograph, taken on September 5, 1982, of a terrain which has virtually remained unchanged since 1945.

COURT OF INQUIRY

Seven days after the disappearance of MW126, a signal was sent from the Air Ministry to Air Marshal Sir James Robb at SHAEF Main Headquarters informing him that vital top secret papers were carried on Leigh-Mallory's aircraft and instructing him that a 'security party' should be sent to the location of the aircraft immediately it was known. Their task would be to 'collect and safeguard all papers found on site' and to try to trace any others taken away. It would appear that among the documents carried by Leigh-Mallory were Chiefs of Staff and Joint Planning Staff papers as well as files handed to him by General Ismay's (War Cabinet) Office. These latter included files covering future operations in SEAC, landing ships and craft for the Command and details of personalities and appointments in that theatre of operations. The Director of Intelligence (Security), Air Commodore K. C. Buss, wrote that it appeared that 'certain of the security safeguards on the transmission of secret documents overseas . . . were not observed'. It is also apparent that while it was known that particular papers were carried, it was by no means an exhaustive list and no one seems to have had full details of the secret and top secret documents in Leigh-Mallory's possession at the time of his death.

At 5.00 p.m. on November 19, the German Radio's Home Service broadcast that the search for Leigh-Mallory's aircraft had been unsuccessful and that it was feasible that a German long-range fighter had shot it down. This broadcast was echoed by another from the 'New British Broadcasting Station' which said ' . . . one theory . . . is that it has been shot down by a new type of German long-range fighter'. Because of these statements, a report was called for by the Prime Minister although RAF Intelligence recognised them as 'Black Propaganda', discounting the use of a new long-range fighter by the Germans. An 'unofficial' theory at this time (November 23) was that the crew of the York had underestimated the tailwind on the leg from Poitiers to Toulouse and that the aircraft had flown into the Pyrenees somewhere south of the line Tarbes—Perpignan.

On November 22, Air Marshal Sir Roderic Hill, AOC-in-C, Fighter Command, wrote to Air Vice-Marshal J. R. Scarlett-Streatfeild, CBE, AOC of No. 38 Group, appointing him President of a Court of Inquiry into the 'Accident involving York MW126 on 14 November 1944 — Passenger Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory'.

At 11.00 a.m. on Thursday, November 23, the Court assembled at HQ, Fighter Command. The other members of the Court were Group Captain P. Stevens, DFC, of No. 11 Operational Training Unit, Wing Commander R. H. S. Mealing of the Air Ministry and Wing Commander Eric E. Stammers from HQ, Fighter Command. The Court sat until November 29 and in that time interviewed a total of twenty-eight witnesses. At the end of the questioning the Court found that there was insufficient evidence to determine the primary cause of the aircraft's disappearance; that dangerous weather conditions were prevailing along the route at the time; that Squadron Leader Lancaster's previous flying experience was not enough 'to enable him to make a correct decision on meeting these weather conditions'. The Court believed that the York should have either turned back or proceeded 'above cloud'. It also stated in its findings that Squadron Leader Lancaster had not acquired sufficient flying experience on York aircraft to undertake an inter-theatre flight as the captain of one in difficult winter flying conditions, and that the pilot's view from a York 'is almost negligible both in rain and snow due to the design of the windscreen'.

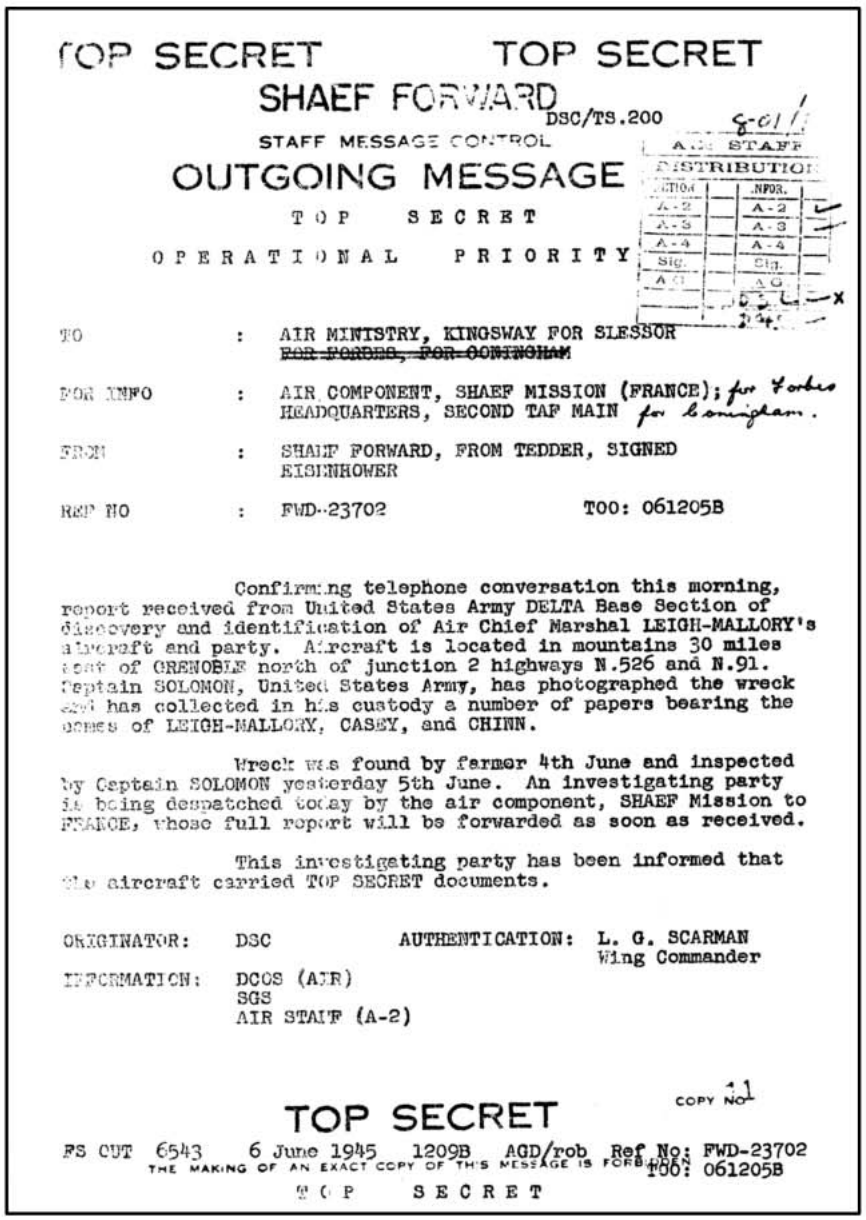
Four possibilities were offered as to the aircraft's end: (i) that after encountering heavy icing it turned towards the Bay of Biscay and eventually crashed into the sea. (ii) That it flew over enemy-occupied territory in western France and was shot down or crashed. (iii) That it overshot Toulouse and flew into high ground in the Pyrenees. (iv) That it turned back and accidently flew over the Channel Islands and was shot down.

The Court also found that undertaking the flight in the weather conditions forecast (the actual conditions turned out to be considerably worse) would have been reasonable with a fully experienced crew, but in view of Lancaster's 'more limited experience the wisdom of starting (was) questionable'.

Two recommendations were made. (i) That when VIPs were carried on inter-theatre flights the aircraft captain and crew should be trained at least to Transport Command standards. (ii) That personal pilots to VIPs should have their qualifications reviewed.

Among their observations the Court wondered if the 'Goodbye' message to the fighter escort could have been picked up by the German 'Y' Service in the Channel Islands, and it considered that all such messages should be coded.

The Proceedings of the Court were



TOP SECRET TOP SECRET

SHAEF FORWARD DSC/TS.200

STAFF MESSAGE CONTROL

OUTGOING MESSAGE

TOP SECRET

OPERATIONAL PRIORITY

TO : AIR MINISTRY, KINGSWAY FOR SLESSOR
~~FOR FORBES, FOR CUNNINGHAM~~

FOR INFO : AIR COMPONENT, SHAEF MISSION (FRANCE); for Forbes
HEADQUARTERS, SECOND TAF MAIN for Cunningham.

FROM : SHAEF FORWARD, FROM TEDDER, SIGNED EISENHOWER

REF NO : FWD-23702 TOO: 061205B

Confirming telephone conversation this morning, report received from United States Army DELTA Base Section of discovery and identification of Air Chief Marshal LEIGH-MALLORY's aircraft and party. Aircraft is located in mountains 30 miles west of GRENOBLE north of junction 2 highways N.526 and N.91. Captain SOLOMON, United States Army, has photographed the wreck and has collected in his custody a number of papers bearing the names of LEIGH-MALLORY, CASEY, and CHINN.

Wreck was found by farmer 4th June and inspected by Captain SOLOMON yesterday 5th June. An investigating party is being despatched today by the air component, SHAEF Mission to FRANCE, whose full report will be forwarded as soon as received.

This investigating party has been informed that the aircraft carried TOP SECRET documents.

ORIGINATOR: DSC AUTHENTICATION: L. G. SCARMAN
Wing Commander

INFORMATION: DCOS (AIR)
SGS
AIR STAFF (A-2)

TOP SECRET COPY NO 11

FS CUT 6543 6 June 1945 1209B AGD/rob Ref No: FWD-23702
THE MAKING OF AN EXACT COPY OF THIS MESSAGE IS FORBIDDEN TOO: 061205B

TOP SECRET

forwarded to the AOC-in-C, Fighter Command, who submitted four copies to the Air Ministry. The outcome was an Air Council letter to the AOC-in-C, Transport Command dated March 16, 1945, informing him that 'the arrangements for the transport of very important personages and the method of selecting air crews' for their aircraft had been under consideration. One of the decisions was that AOsC-in-C and those 'of comparable standing' would be able to approve the crews that were to fly their personal aircraft, although when the aircraft were to undertake long distance flights the AOC-in-C of Transport Command was to make the final approval and report to the Air Ministry.

SEVEN MONTHS LATER

On Monday, June 4, 1945, a thaw was setting in over the trails and passes around le Rivier d'Allemont. Seraphin Mathieu, the electricity worker who had heard the aircraft crash in the mountains that wild day almost seven months before, was climbing in the Sept Laux range. On reaching a gully some distance up the mountain, Mathieu came upon the wreckage of MW126. Scattered over a wide area and still covered with a layer of snow were the smashed parts of a once powerful aircraft, together with the equally broken, but pitiful human remains of the York's crew and passengers. Around them was a scattering of official documents and personal effects. Even in early June, with the crunch of snow underfoot and the pall of death in the air, the scene was stark and chill. Mathieu hurried down the mountainside and on reaching Allemont contacted the Gendarmerie who telephoned the nearest military post the following day. This was the US Army detachment in Grenoble.

In his headquarters at Eastern Command, Lyon District of Delta Base Section in Grenoble, Captain Elkan F. Solomon, US Cavalry, the Executive Officer, received news of the crashed aircraft which he, in turn, relayed to Major Edgar Lewis at Lyon District Headquarters. Then, accompanied by Pfc. William Sykes, Solomon proceeded to investigate the crash site. After what must have been a hard and tiring climb in the late afternoon sunshine, the men reached the gully and surveyed the scene. There are no recorded impressions of that moment but it is not difficult to imagine the horror with which they took in the tragedy now literally spread out before them. All around in that silent hell of death and desolation lay the wreckage of MW126 spread over 250 yards. Interwoven with it or flung many yards away lay the bodies and parts of bodies of the victims — torn, broken and crushed. Some of the bodies were almost entirely buried in snow, others, completely uncovered; one was a woman in civilian clothes. From the uniforms and papers lying around it became evident to Captain Solomon that the aircraft and crew were British and the passengers were Air Chief Marshal Leigh-Mallory and his wife. It was around midnight when Captain Solomon and Pfc. Sykes returned to Grenoble, the Captain submitting his report to the duty officer in Lyon also informing him that he would notify the RAF. The site of the crash was given as approximately 3½ kilometres due west of le Rivier d'Allemont at an elevation of 1,000 metres above the hamlet; travelling over a steep mountain trail it had taken the two men about 2½ hours to reach the scene of the crash.

On returning to his office Captain Solomon tried unsuccessfully to telephone Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, Deputy Supreme Allied Commander, who had once stayed at Solomon's headquarters in a converted hotel. On failing to contact Tedder he rang the office of the Secretary, General Staff, SHAEF, where he spoke to Major Robert D. Stuart of the General Staff Corps. Stuart sent a memorandum to Tedder reporting the discovery of Leigh-Mallory's aircraft and the action taken so far. Tedder telephoned Air Marshal Slessor at the Air Ministry with the news and followed up with a top secret signal of confirmation. In it he gave the crash location as being 'in mountains 30 miles west of Grenoble north of junction 2 highways N526 and N91'. There are three errors in this signal: (i) the distance of the crash location from Grenoble was 16½ miles, although possibly thirty miles by road; (ii) it was east of Grenoble, not west; and (iii) highway N526 is really D526. Tedder also stated in the signal that an investigating party was being despatched that day by the Air Component, SHAEF Mission. The investigating officer was Squadron Leader G. A. G. Christie, Executive Officer, A-I of the Mission, who arrived in Grenoble during the late afternoon of June 7, with instructions to identify the aircraft and return immediately to SHAEF (Forward) Headquarters with all secret documents. In his search for these Christie found some personal effects and various identity and technical papers; these were handed to the Administrative Officer of No. 4 Base Area. The only classified papers found referred to Operation Overlord, the D-Day landings of the previous year. They were given to Flight Lieutenant Casey of Air Ministry Air Intelligence.

Squadron Leader Christie stated in his report written on June 19, that the aircraft had completely disintegrated and part of the wreckage was still under snow. Instruments from the control panel were found 300 yards apart. He also wrote that there was evidence of fire.

During the next few days several happenings occurred: the French authorities issued a decree on June 8, forbidding anyone to approach the crash site unless accompanied by an Allied officer. Five members of the RAF police were stationed in Allemont to guard the site. Aerial and ground photographs were taken of the wreckage, and various RAF officers, including a medical officer and chaplain, arrived to assist in the search of the area and disposal of the bodies.

At 10.00 a.m. on Saturday, June 9, the Chief Inspector of Accidents at the Air Ministry received a signal from No. 108 Repair and Salvage Unit (RSU) at Marseilles stating that the wreckage of a York had been found high in the mountains near Rivier d'Allemont; it was identified as MW126. Two days later, on Monday, June 11, Group Captain P. G. Tweedie, Deputy Chief Inspector of Accidents (DCIA), proceeded to France to inspect the wreckage. Arriving in Grenoble the following morning he arranged to climb the mountain the next day in the

Above: **Seraphin Mathieu surveys the scene of carnage.** *Below:* **Today smaller fragments still remain scattered amongst the rocks.**

company of others detailed to assist in the funeral arrangements.

One of the officers was Group Captain V. R. Moon, Officer Commanding, No. 4 Base Area, who had received instructions to take charge of the operation from the AOC, No. 87 Group. On arriving at Grenoble on June 12, at about 2.30 p.m., he interviewed First Lieutenant William Doherty of No. 52 Troop Carrier Wing, USAAF, Leigh-Mallory's son-in-law, who had arrived by air a short time before. Doherty informed Moon that it was his wife's wish and also that of the relatives that the Leigh-Mallorys should be buried in the local village cemetery rather than in a military one. Doherty was keen to accompany the party to the crash site but Moon succeeded in dissuading him from this course and Doherty returned to his unit at Amiens Glisy. Moon also spoke with Christie who told him that because of the highly decomposed state of the bodies 'it was essential that they should be put under ground with the minimum of delay'. Moon decided that if it was practicable to bring the bodies down the mountain, and if there was sufficient ground available in the cemetery, then he would arrange for the burial in Rivier d'Allemont. After telephoning his decision to Air Commodore W. J. M. Akerman, the AOC of No. 87 Group, he instructed Flying Officer Nurse of No. 4 Base Area, who had arrived in Grenoble, to order ten coffins from a local contractor for delivery in Allemont either that evening or on the following morning. He was also to arrange through the Gendarmerie for twelve mules and muleteers to be ready to ascend the mountain the next morning.

Group Captain Moon accompanied by Squadron Leader J. T. Newington, his Administrative Officer, Squadron Leader the Rev. B. A. Evans, the Chaplain from No. 4

Jean Paul standing in for M. Mathieu (who died in 1973) in another of his comparisons illustrating 'J.P.'s' perfectionist approach.

Base Area, and an interpreter, travelled by jeep to Allemont. On the way he came upon Flight Lieutenant Hicks, the Medical Officer of No. 108 RSU, who told him that he had already been up to the site and had identified and wrapped five of the bodies and parts of the remains of other bodies. After a 1¼ hour journey, at times quite perilous with a precipitous drop on one side, the small party of officers arrived at le Rivier d'Allemont.

Their first stop was at the small but beautiful cemetery, built on the side of the mountain just below the hamlet, and from there the officers went on to visit the Mayor, Monsieur de Giroutru, who resided in the neighbouring hamlet of Fonderie Allemont and, with the aid of an interpreter and a plan of the cemetery, obtained permission for the interment of the deceased. On returning to Grenoble, Moon called an immediate conference at which the following day's arrangements were planned; the meeting

finally broke up at 1.00 a.m. the funeral having been fixed for 2.30 p.m. on Friday, June 15.

The morning of June 13 found Group Captains Moon and Tweedie, Flight Lieutenant Hicks and his medical sergeant on the climb up the mountain, together with muleteers and twelve mules, led by an experienced guide. The climb was hot but two halts were made, the first for a breather, the second for refreshments and here the party met with their first real problem. The mules refused to budge and no amount of persuasion could move them. The party therefore had to proceed, taking as many of the muleteers as could be spared, and the last 800-1,000ft was covered although Group Captain Moon's own feelings were summed up by his remark that anywhere a Group Captain could go, then so could a mule.

On reaching the site of the crash the party found the wreckage strewn down the south-easterly face of a V-shaped crevasse; deep snow still lay over the site with parts of the aircraft protruding up through the blanket of white. On the upper floor of the crevasse lay three of the engines, two propellers and reduction gear, the rear of the fuselage, tail wheel, 15ft of elevator spar and elevator parts, as well as pieces of tailplane. Also spread around amongst the tail wreckage were parts of the DR compass master unit. Members of the party poking around with their steel climbing rods found beneath the white surface other pieces of aircraft leading them to believe that a considerable portion was yet to be discovered when the snow melted.

On the south-easterly slope of the mountain was found still more wreckage completely disintegrated by its crashing, tearing fall down that steep, boulder-strewn surface. At the top of the fan-shaped trail were pieces of cockpit and the throttle levers. At intervals down the slope lay furnishings, luggage, engine and undercarriage parts, the cylinder blocks, crankshaft and pistons of the fourth engine, together with the propeller blades badly broken. Here also was found 6ft of the port wing tip. But the most tragic feature of this pathway of destruction was the scattered and broken bodies in various attitudes of violent and sudden extinction. Here was the main reason for the ascent of the mountain by the mixed group of Servicemen and civilian muleteers. This pathetic collection of flesh and bones had now begun to smell in the early summer sunshine and the doctor, Flight Lieutenant Hicks, and his medical sergeant, set to their gruesome task of collecting and identifying the remains of the victims while others in the party, handkerchiefs over their noses and mouths, continued the search through snow, ice and wreckage.

Group Captain Tweedie, looking for a cause of the accident, examined the propeller blades 'which were all heavily twisted, scored and bent backwards over their reduction gears'. He concluded that 'all four engines had been running under power at the moment of impact' and reported that there was no sign of the engines being on fire, and the fire that had broken out had been around the area where the petrol tanks had burst. All the engines appeared to have been adequately lubricated.

In assessing the aircraft's flight path Group Captain Tweedie judged that it had been flying in a south-south-easterly direction and had struck the top of the crevasse, somersaulting down the slope and disintegrating. However, he could not be sure that MW126 had not struck some other rock formation in the range although given that the course was the one mentioned above as suggested by the compass setting and wreckage distribution, and assuming that the aircraft was flying between 7,000 and 8,000ft, this mountain was the first the aircraft would have encountered. Significantly, Tweedie reported that even if the peak had been cleared and the course and

Flight Lieutenant Hicks and his medical sergeant had the unenviable job of recovering the pathetic broken remains which had been lying in the open for seven months.

A snapshot from M. Mathieu's album — the RAF investigating team in the tiny main street at le Rivier d'Allemont.

height maintained for only a few more minutes the York would undoubtedly 'have flown into very much higher mountain ranges' where Le Grand Rousses reached 10,800ft and La Meije towered 13,000ft into the thin mountain air.

After 4½ hours at the site the party began the descent, having found and identified all the bodies. All were badly smashed and it was deduced that death had been instantaneous. Each was carefully wrapped in dinghy cloth and attached to poles for the awkward journey to the ledge where the patient mules waited. The bodies were then transferred onto the backs of the mules and the dangerous, winding descent continued until Allemont was reached.

Upon returning to the village the party placed the bodies in the temporary mortuary, a building loaned by Monsieur Leon Prayer inside of which a platform had been erected for the coffins. By this time a representative from the Imperial War Graves Commission, Captain Clements, had arrived in Allemont with the Padre and had measured the coffins which now stood ready to receive the mortal remains of Leigh-Mallory, his wife and crew. Meanwhile, back in Grenoble, Group Captain Moon called another conference to discuss the following day's programme at which the Medical Officer expressed doubts as to whether they had collected all the remains of Leigh-Mallory and one other body. It was therefore decided that he and Captain Clements should return to Allemont early the next morning, place the bodies in the coffins, then with two mules and muleteers go on up to the crash site to search for the missing remains. It was also decided that twenty German prisoners-of-war should dig the graves under the supervision of the busy Captain Clements. The final funeral arrangements were discussed and agreed including details for the reception of mourners, luncheon for fifteen guests to be provided by Major R. I. Bergstrom, the US commander, and tea after the ceremony at the Hotel Moderne. The Gendarmerie agreed to close the road to Allemont between the hours of 10.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m., an important point as the movement of goats and sheep at this time of year was usually very heavy.

On June 14, the PoWs were set to work digging the graves, completing the task by that evening. Captain Clements and Flight Lieutenant Hicks returned from the crash site with the missing remains, much to the relief of Group Captain Moon. The bodies were placed in the coffins and name plates affixed; all was now ready for the funeral.

We visit le Rivier thirty-seven years later, climbing the same steep winding road from Allemond to the deserted village.

THE FINAL CHAPTER

No photographs of the funeral ceremony could be traced in public archives — these snapshots came to light in the village whilst researching the story.

The funeral was timed to commence at 2.30 p.m. on Friday, June 15, but before the ceremony began the coffins were already in the graves. This had been decided the night before because of the distance from the mortuary to the cemetery and the steep incline which led to it. Squadron Leader Newington was despatched to the cemetery to receive and brief the funeral parties.

The first mourner to arrive was Air Commodore Akerman, AOC, No. 87 Group, who proceeded almost immediately to the airport to meet Air Marshal C. R. Carr, the newly-appointed Deputy Chief of Staff (Air) at SHAEF. He was followed by the British Consul-General at Lyons, Mr. Robert Parr accompanied by Mrs. Parr; Monsieur Yves Farge, the French Commissioner for Rhone-Alpes representing General de Gaulle, and two ladies. Others attending included the British Naval, Military and Air Attaches from Paris; Colonel McKennon, Major Bergstrom and Captain Solomon, all of the US Army; General Doyen; Colonel Malraison, the Military Governor of Grenoble; Monsieur Reynier, the Prefect of Isere and his wife; Colonel Hartmann, representing the French Air Minister and Monsieur de Giroutru, the Mayor of le Rivier d'Allemont. The chief mourner was First Lieutenant Doherty, Leigh-Mallory's son-in-law.

The ceremony was a little late in starting due to the breakdown of two of the mourners cars, however, soon all was ready for the service to begin. Against the majestic back-drop of towering mountains with their tree-covered slopes and snow-capped peaks, the wreaths of roses, carnations and gladioli were laid beside the Union Flags covering the

ground next to the graves. Among the wreaths were those from the Air Council, the Royal Air Force and Women's Auxiliary Air Force, the US Army, SHAEF, three RAF commands — Fighter, Transport and 2nd Tactical Air Force, a 4ft wreath from No. 87 Group and one from the people of Isere. But the most poignant tribute came from the children of Rivier d'Allemont. Just before the ceremony began the school-children walked in procession to the cemetery carrying bunches of red, white and blue wild flowers which they had picked from the mountain slopes that morning.

In brilliant sunshine the mourners and troops assembled; detachments from the US Army and French Air Force were in position alongside an RAF guard of honour. In an adjoining meadow was stationed the band of the 6th Battalion, Chasseurs Alpins, which began the ceremony with a solemn march, its sad notes echoing among the surrounding mountains. Reverend Evans then read the Burial Service and reminded the assembly of the unswerving loyalty, devotion and skill with which the deceased had served their King and Country. He went on: 'We shall bury them here midst the mountains which have claimed their bodies for their own . . . No fitter tomb which speaks of strength, of beauty and of peace could be desired as a resting place of those whose daring and sacrifice in the air has made for the progress and uplift of mankind.' He then spoke of the gratitude owed to the Mayor and inhabitants of le Rivier d'Allemont who had offered every facility 'with much kindness and willingness of heart'. The accident site, he had been told, had been marked with stones in the form of a cross and he concluded by saying that the Air Chief Marshal, his wife and crew did not live to see victory in Europe. They had given life itself in the hope of a new world in which peace and goodwill could flourish. He commended their souls to God as their bodies were committed to the ground.

A firing party provided by the Royal Air Force raised their rifles and fired three volleys into the air, the shots echoing around the high peaks of the mountain range. This was followed by the Last Post and Reveille sounded by an RAF trumpeter during which all ranks came to attention, officers saluting. Most of the officers then marched in turn to the graveside, saluted and left the cemetery. The last ceremonial was the march past of the US, French and RAF contingents; as they reached the graveside the order 'Eyes right' was given and with officers saluting, the troops paid their last respects.

So ended the short funeral service, all that remained was for the graves to be filled in and wooden crosses erected.

The ten graves were marked by Commonwealth War Graves headstones. Lady Leigh-Mallory's marker has the notched style denoting a civilian casualty, and Flight Lieutenant Keith Mooring's was replaced in 1979 as it fractured due to frost damage. These are now made from harder wearing Botticino marble rather than the original Portland stone.

Claude Pellissier *(above left)* **recovered one of the huge main wheel tyres** *(above)* **by the simple expedient of setting it rolling down the mountain. He intended using the rubber in his garage but luckily it was still intact at the time of our visit. He showed us pieces of perspex from the canopy he hid in the forest with a view of retrieving it later. It still remains there today.**

POSTSCRIPT

The ceremony was reported in the London newspapers and in the local French press with varying degrees of accuracy; *Les Allobroges,* published in Grenoble, carried a good photograph of the funeral service on its front page, the backdrop being provided by the mountains of the Sept Laux range, graphically described in French as 'Massif'.

A sidelight on the happenings at Allemont was the discomfort suffered by the small detachment of RAF police from the unit in Paris. As some of them were in pain from badly sunburned legs through wearing shorts they were relieved by men from No. 41 Flight at Marseilles.

Letters of thanks were written to various individuals and organisations, including one from Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder to Lieutenant General J. C. H. Lee, Commanding General, Communications Zone, US Army, commending the assistance given by the Cavalry Captain Solomon who, for a period of six or seven days had worked all day helping with recovery arrangements before settling down to his own day's work, sometimes at 11.00 p.m. Other 'thank you' letters were sent to the Mayor of le Rivier d'Allemont, Mme. Verve Chatel, the cafe owner, who cooked for the airmen billeted in the hamlet, and the Adjudant Chef of the Gendarmerie Brigade de Bourg d'Oisans. However, it appears to the writer that justice has not necessarily been completely done in this respect. The three brave men, Messieurs Matthey, Uguhetto and Jeanton, who went in search of a flame on the mountain, and climbed 7,700ft in thick snow while the storm still raged about them, must have placed their lives in peril. As far as the writer can judge they were never rewarded or even thanked for their gallant, if fruitless efforts.

In London preparations were going ahead for a memorial service at Westminster Abbey and *The Times* of June 18 reported that this would take place at noon on Thursday, June 28. On the appointed day the service was taken by the Dean of Westminster and the Chaplain-in-Chief for the Royal Air Force read the Lesson. The King, the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Air were all represented and those attending included members of the Air Council and officials of the Air Ministry. The Admiralty was represented by Rear Admiral T. H. Troubridge, and the Army Council by Lieutenant-General Sir Archibald Nye, Vice-Chief of the Imperial General Staff. Brigadier-General Lord Croft, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for War and the High Commissioners for New Zealand and South Africa were among those attending. General Carl Spaatz, Commanding General US Strategic Air Forces, and General Curtis, together with many USAAF officers, were seated in the Abbey as well as a large number of senior RAF officers. The Royal Australian and Royal New Zealand Air Forces were in evidence, represented by their respective Air Officers Commanding, Air Commodores H. N. Wrigley and K. L. Caldwell. Others in the large congregation were Lord and Lady Kemsley, Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Pownall, Sir William Rootes and representatives of the French, Polish, Belgian, Czech, Norwegian and Netherlands Air Forces.

Among the families present was the daughter of Leigh-Mallory, the father and family of Squadron Leader Lancaster and relations of other members of the ill-fated crew. Unfortunately, the chief mourner was missing. Thomas T. Leigh-Mallory, his son, was prevented by illness from attending.

The day before the memorial service was to take place, the Chief Inspector of Accidents (CIA) at the Air Ministry, sent a minute to the Director of Accident Prevention (DPA) forwarding a copy of Group Captain Tweedie's report on the crash of MW126. Paragraph 2 of the minute referred to the possible re-opening of the Court of Inquiry and the CIA gave his personal viewpoint that 'to do so would be a waste of time'. DPA, in forwarding the report to the Director-General of Training and the Air Member for Training (AMT), agreed with the CIA's remarks on re-opening the case. Air Marshal Sir Roderic Hill, now AMT, passed on DCIA's report to the Chief of the Air Staff through the Air Member for Personnel and the Vice-Chief of the Air Staff, expressing his agreement with DPA's remarks. The Chief of the Air Staff, Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Charles Portal, referred the file containing the report to Sir Archibald Sinclair, the Secretary of State for Air; however, neither of them mentioned the question of the re-opening of the Court of Inquiry.

Anything useful or having any scrap value was removed by locals — the great majority in 1945. The serving tray and fork were taken by M. Mathieu and are now owned by his son; the tail wheel by Claude Pellissier and the landing light by Jean Bouvet.

The same narrow trail through the woods used by the investigating and recovery teams in June 1945 was our route in July 1982.

IN RETROSPECT

That, as far as official records go, ends the story of the Leigh-Mallory accident. The general euphoria of the end of the war in Europe, and the later realisation that the Japanese remained to be beaten, together with the thought that this might still take years to accomplish, no doubt tended to push the Leigh-Mallory disaster out of most people's minds. The newspapers were concerned with the General Election and change of Government; the dropping of the atomic bombs and the surrender of Japan; the bringing home of the 'Forgotten Army' and prisoners-of-war from the Far East; and the subsequent demobilisation of the Forces with all the attendant problems of 'civvy street'. Any thoughts of Leigh-Mallory must soon have been extinguished apart, that is, from the minds of his family and friends.

What caused York MW126 to crash? Did the blame lie with Leigh-Mallory? A forceful personality, did he insist on carrying on when natural caution and commonsense should have suggested turning back? If so, it is difficult to understand why, as, in spite of one of the findings of the Court of Inquiry, the urgency of his journey had diminished. Did the pilot, inexperienced in both handling the York and in the number of hours flying it, obstinately press on? This seems an unlikely conclusion. Remember also, that although Lancaster had 2,045 flying hours to his credit, most of these had been on long outdated biplanes.

That the navigator lost his way seems to be a fairly safe assumption; it is known that the aircraft was 250 miles off track in a distance of approximately 360 miles and, with no radar to help him, all we can wonder is where did he first miss his way. Another unknown factor is why the captain, 2nd pilot and navigator were chosen to fly, to them, an unfamiliar aircraft. Why wasn't the crew picked from No. 511 Squadron, a transport squadron, experienced in flying Yorks for long distances? Is it significant that the aircraft had no windscreen wiper; would it have made any difference and did the de-icing fluid cease to function?

All these imponderables can never be answered; similarly, the large question mark over the actual crash. One can only surmise. It is probable that Leigh-Mallory was in the cockpit with the crew, straining an extra pair of eyes as the York flew through the snow and ice of the blizzard to explode into fragments against the impenetrable mountain wall. What of Lady Leigh-Mallory? Was she sitting calmly in her seat awaiting the inevitable? Or was she with her husband of twenty-nine years when she was flung into eternity? In the prevailing conditions several, if not all of those on board, must have felt, at least, apprehension. Most people have been lost at one time or another and must have experienced a particular kind of fear when this has happened. How much more fearful to be aboard a strange, cold, uncomfortable aircraft, lost in a raging snowstorm over unfamiliar territory.

Was the aircraft overweight? As we have seen, Lancaster complained of the extra weight of 500 cartridges, most probably of the sporting variety as a twisted 12-bore shotgun was found in the wreckage, and villagers talk of the mass of personal belongings including cutlery and china. We will never know if, or what part any of these questions played in the now insoluble mystery of the death of Leigh-Mallory.

Above: **Emerging from the forest, a wide plateau led up to the escarpment on the left which had to be scaled to reach the crash valley. This plateau was as far as the mules would go — we pushed on** *(below)* **ever upwards.**

TODAY

'Aluminium Valley' commences at this point. The York flew away from the photographer to impact into the rock face in the left background.

We felt that the death of the highest ranking officer to serve in the Royal Air Force in the Second World War was of significant historical interest, especially when the person concerned was such a controversial personality as Leigh-Mallory. Therefore, with Denis Bateman's expertly researched and detailed story as a guide as to what had taken place, in July 1982, just over thirty-seven years after the crash site was first located by Seraphin Mathieu, we set out on the 800-mile drive to le Rivier d'Allemont. We largely followed the believed track of the aircraft across France until, late in the afternoon of the second day, the mountains of the French Alps appeared in the distance. Passing through Grenoble, location of the HQ of the US detachment first called to the scene, we

One of the broken undercarriage legs lies in a crevice. From the evidence remaining it would appear that the tyre either caught or was set on fire consuming also the magnesium hub.

began the steep ascent to le Rivier, along a road which saw much Resistance activity as several memorials stand testimony. At Allemond, at 2,400ft, the road ahead has now been closed for the construction of a huge dam, one of two currently being built which, in five years time, will result in a major part of the valley being flooded in a combined hydro/nuclear electric scheme. (Water will flow from the higher to the lower lake during the day, driving turbine generators, while at night surplus nuclear-produced electricity will be utilised to pump the water back to the higher level through a tunnel being bored through solid rock.)

Here the road to le Rivier, 1,600ft higher up, becomes smaller — the narrow winding road described by the searchers in 1945. Reaching the village, we found the cemetery perched on the hillside — the ten immaculate headstones standing out against a majestic mountain backdrop. Behind Mrs. Leigh-Mallory's grave today lies that of M. Mathieu, the man who stumbled on the aircraft wreckage by accident and who died in 1973.

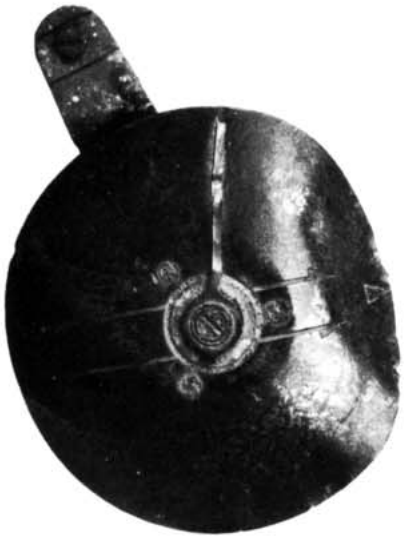
Accompanying us on our visit was our French author Jean Paul Pallud with his wife Marie Francoise, an experienced mountaineer. This was their home ground and Jean Paul had already made enquiries to the village by telephone as to what we might expect of the crash site today. We were somewhat concerned beforehand not knowing how much was already known locally of its location lest we should betray too much information in advance of our visit. The only people really interested in 'high ground' wrecks in the UK are enthusiasts (with little concerted interest in France), and with the Leigh-Mallory wreckage sitting another 2,700ft above the village, we were looking forward to visiting what we hoped would be a virtually untouched crash site. We could have spared our worries. We discovered that virtually every able-bodied person from le Rivier visited the site way back in 1945 — not out of any historical interest but merely to remove anything useful and to salvage everything which could be sold to add to their meagre incomes. Thus, for reasons we had not even considered, possibly nine-tenths of the 28-ton York and its contents has been manhandled down, what we found lightly loaded, a gruelling mountain path.

Our telephone contact in le Rivier, Jean Bouvet, showed us the landing light, still in mint condition, that he found in the snow in 1945 and we soon traced one of the huge mainwheel tyres and the tailwheel. The descent of the former must have been really spectacular as Claude Pellissier started it rolling down the mountain from the crash valley, completing the 2,000-odd foot descent in seconds in ever-increasing bounces, ending up in the forest just above the village! It is said that there was some looting of the wreckage and personal belongings before the RAF came on the scene (one item which never came to light was Leigh-Mallory's expensive, engraved cigarette case), and much was plundered as soon as the guard was removed. A suitcase full of green socks soon found ready wearers and canteens of RAF cutlery supplemented many households.

The next day we arose early ready for our trek up the mountain to see what was left. Although it was typical August weather, the early morning nip necessitated pullovers although these were discarded as we sweated upwards through the forest. At about 5,250ft, the trees petered out and we emerged onto a steeply-sloping, grassy hillside. To our right the stream called Bruyant lived up to its name of 'noisy', while ahead a formidable cliff towered above us. Although Jean Paul and his wife skipped ahead on what they termed as no more than a walk, to your Editor and son, more used to just climbing flights of stairs, it was quite an experience. At this stage, at the spot where the mules refused to go on in 1945, the first few drops of rain began to fall. By the time we had surmounted the cliff, at which point we were able to see the lower end of another valley at the top of which towered the crest of the mountain hit by the York, the rain was annoyingly becoming heavier. After so much planning and so much driving to get to this out-of-the-way spot, it looked as if Mother Nature had it in for us. As we climbed up 'Aluminium Valley', so dubbed by Jean Paul as he followed the trail of body skin brought down the mountain by melting snows, it really began to rain in earnest . . . the fog came down . . . and within minutes what had been a warm sunny day had changed to that of mid-winter. Shivering in our inadequate attire, we squeezed under overhanging boulders, seeking refuge. As the temperature dropped suddenly so did our spirits although, well aware that mountain conditions can change virtually within minutes, we vowed to stick it out in the hope of an improvement. Visibility was reduced to a few yards and what might have been a humorous sight of a Frenchman and his wife lying under a rock covering themselves with pieces of aluminium eating peaches, was tempered by the knowledge that ten people had died sheltering behind that same aluminium on this precise spot.

After what seemed an interminable interlude, soaked absolutely to the skin and violently shivering from the cold with hands barely able to function, I am sorry to have to report that all sense of duty left us. With no break in the weather in sight, there became no other thought but to get off that blasted mountain as soon as possible. Loaded up with as much plunder as we could carry, we stumbled and squelched our way downhill in the fog, trying to retrace our steps. We were thankful to have the experience of Jean Paul as it would have been so easy to start down a wrong path and, with visibility only a few yards, fall over a sheer drop. As it was we came down by a different route but thereby had a stroke of luck. We had been told in the village that one piece of wing lay many hundreds of metres away from the main impact point. Whether it was torn off by

Last photos on our abortive trip. The tail wheel fork pictured just before the weather closed in and we were forced to take meagre shelter under the rocks.

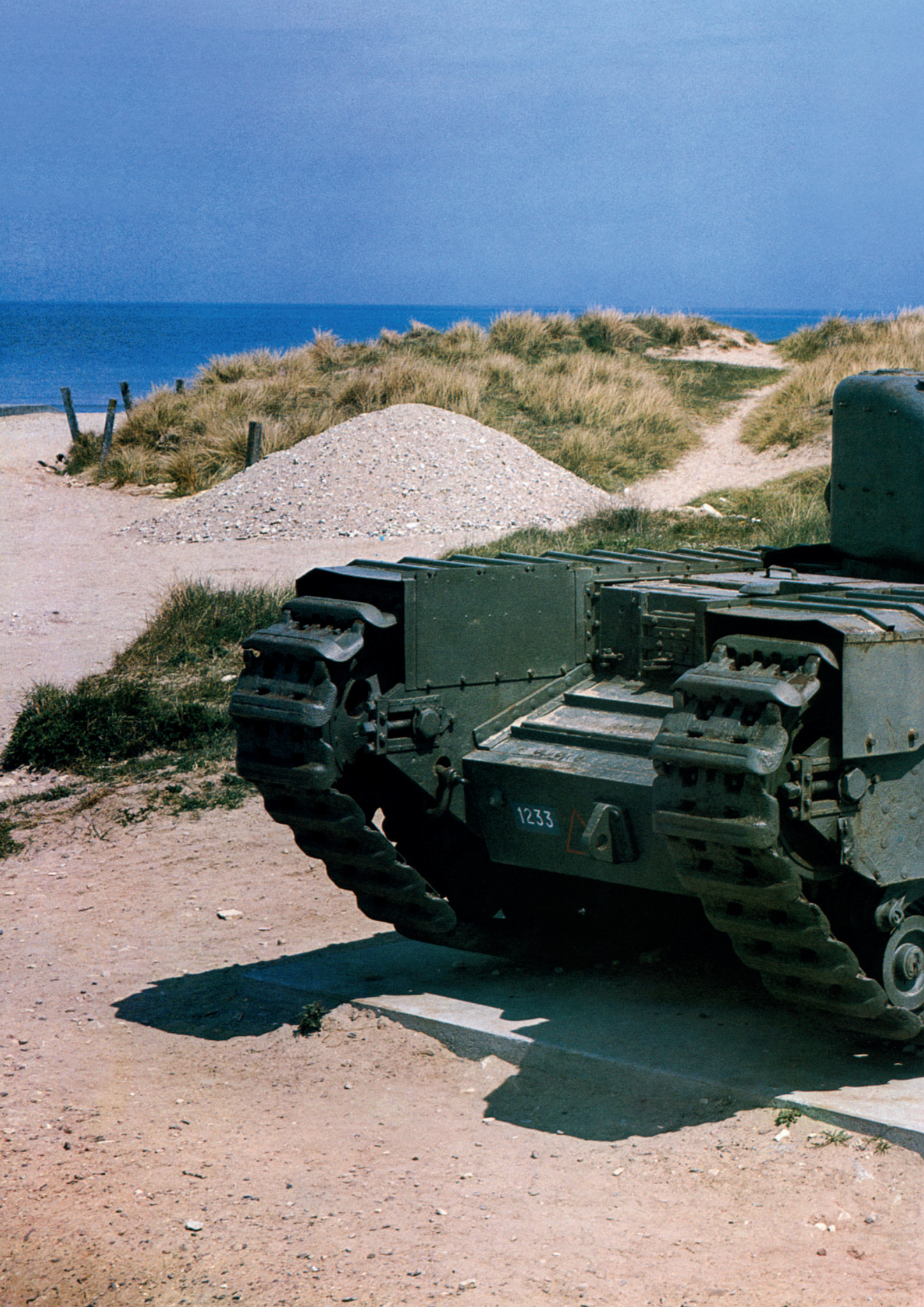


hitting the lower cliff or flung there on impact is impossible to say but it certainly is the largest section of the York still to remain. (We were also told that a large part of the cockpit canopy still lies in the forest but Claude Pellissier who hid it there is now too old to go and look for it.)

As we came on the wing section, which lies on the grassy section above the tree line, the rain stopped and the sky cleared enabling a good photograph to be taken for our cover. Jean Paul suggested we might try returning to the crash but, as there was no guarantee that it was not still raining at the higher altitude, and the fact that we were still soaking wet, the spirit as well as the flesh was weak. However, JP, as we call him, volunteered to return another day and 'run up' to take the comparison photographs we had been unable to match. Such keenness puts us to shame although I personally was not sorry to forgo another trek up to Aluminium Valley.

After we returned home the weather in the Alps remained unpredictable until Saturday, September 5, when JP set out with two friends to revisit the site. Not only did they take the excellent comparison shots reproduced here, but the three of them managed to recover the huge tailwheel fork. Jean Paul writes that, 'it took us three hours of dramatic races down the slopes to keep the thing in the right direction; we broke two ropes and got eighteen blisters on our hands — in fact I have got six so I calculate three times six equals eighteen! It is in very good shape and needs only to be cleaned a little. The beast is some six feet long and weighs about 80kgs.' What else can we say other than 'Vive la France!'

Relics retrieved. The human aspect was brought sharply home to us with the discovery of pieces of personal equipment: a battered tin hat, haversack webbing, a zip, a knife and mess tin. A lady's shoe fell apart as we picked it up. Items from the aircraft itself illustrated here are part of the compass, a radio plate, steward's call button, an access panel and engine manifold.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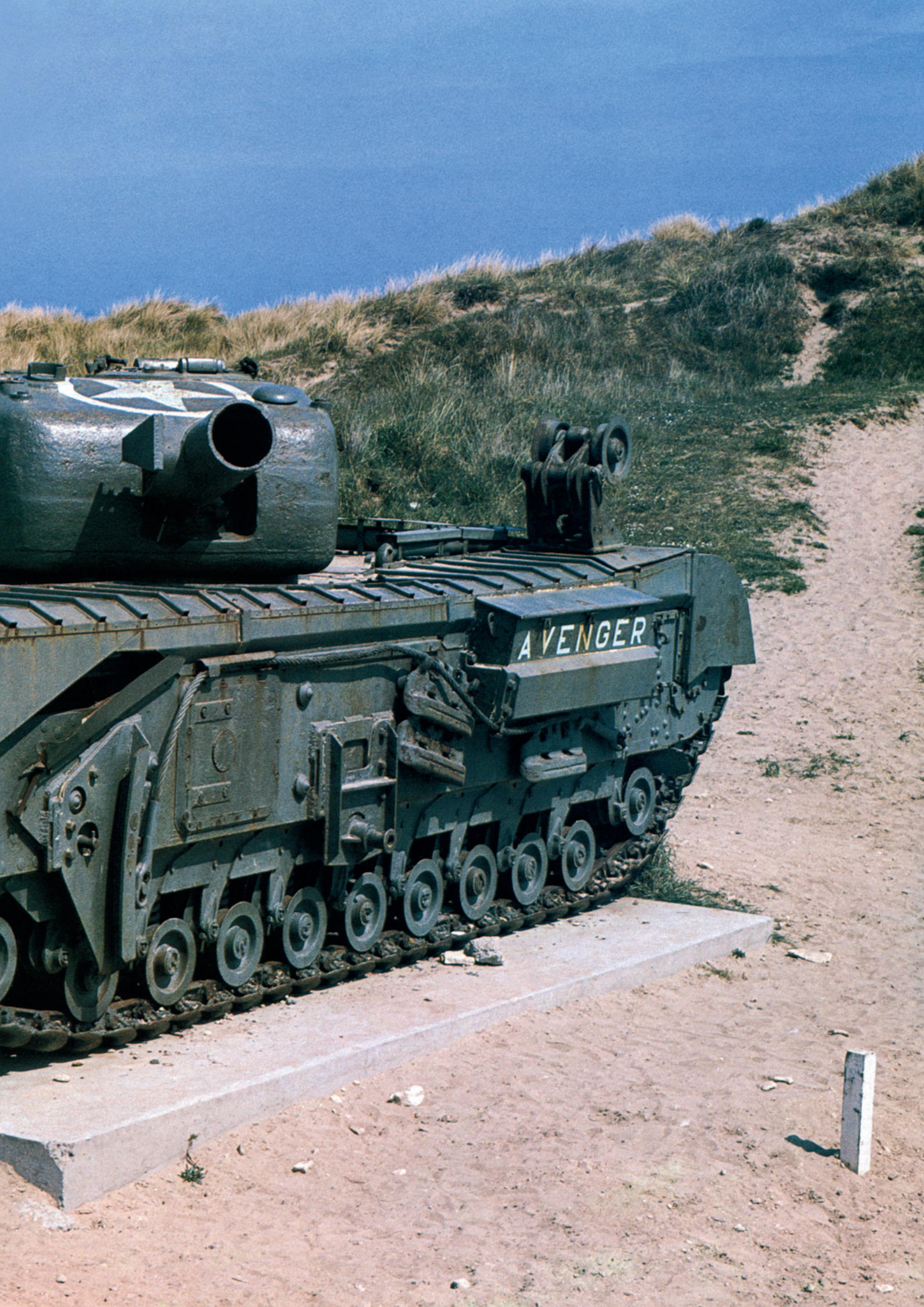
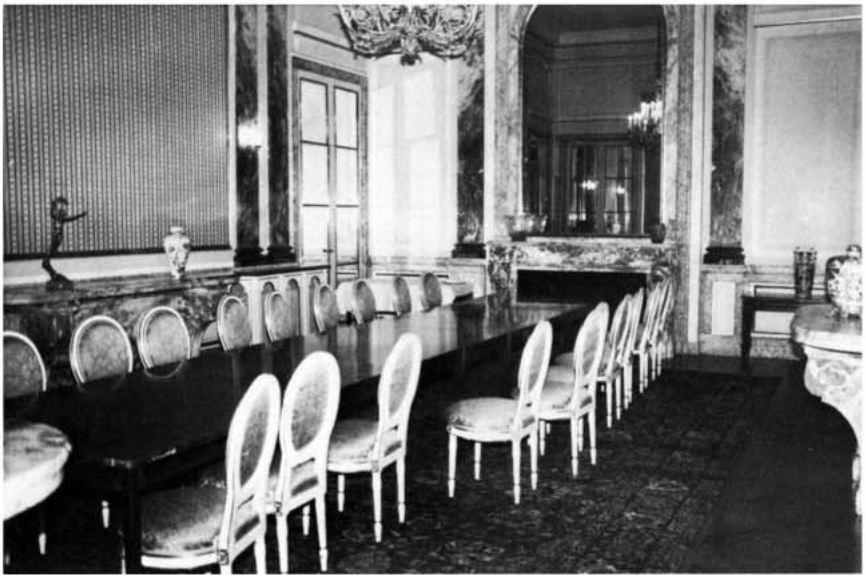

AVENGER

TV PICTURES FROM OCCUPIED PARIS

BY MICHAEL OCKENDEN

Even before the current wave of nostalgia washed through British television, the Second World War had been a rich source of material for the programme makers. Granada's immensely popular *Family at War* was only one of many series showing life on the Home Front. But as we sit in front of our TV screens in the 1980s watching pictures of people sitting around wireless sets in the 1940s, it is strange to think that a small group of British servicemen and women actually served their country by spending several hours of a wartime day watching television. Not that they sat comfortably at home being entertained by the genteel output from BBC's Alexandra Palace — that had gone off the air without ceremony on September 1, 1939 at the end of a Mickey Mouse cartoon. These viewers were the WRNS and RAF personnel based at a secret listening post perched on the cliff top at Beachy Head in Sussex. Exposed to frequent air attacks from Focke Wulf 190 hit-and-run raiders as well as the south-westerly gales, this special 'Noise Station' — so called because its attention was primarily directed, not at morse and RT transmissions, but towards navigational beacons, radars and radio-controlled bombs — kept a daily watch on the television signals from the Eiffel Tower; from the earliest tests in the summer of 1942 until the programmes ceased in August 1944. As well as providing an insight into German morale, this monitoring had the added bonus that newsreel shots of bomb damage might reveal how efficient had been the RAF's bombing of targets in Germany and occupied France.

Before continuing with an account of this little-known episode of the war, it is worth considering the history of European television in the 1930s, a time when there was much experimentation into the number of lines required to make up a picture of good definition on a television screen. The BBC's low definition television service, inaugurated for regular use in 1932, used only 30 lines. In Germany, regular television broadcasts with



Standing in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower, the Czechoslovakian Embassy lies in the middle of the Avenue Charles Floquet. The first German television studio was located in this room on the ground floor (J. P. Pallud).

180 lines began in 1935 with the BBC deciding in favour of 405 lines from February 5, 1937 (following experiments with 240 lines) and the Deutsche Reichspost settling for 441 lines on July 15, 1937. Another important difference between the two countries was that whereas in Britain sets were being mass produced for the domestic market, the German TV viewer had largely to be content with a number of public 'television parlours' (Ferhsehstuben) in and around Berlin. There were a few sets in private homes, but only some fifty production models of the budget-priced E-1 Volksfernseher (People's Television Receiver) had left the factory before its manufacture was halted at the outbreak of war. In 1938, the Radio Diffusion Nationale in Paris used a 455-line system with a powerful transmitter housed in a concrete bunker at the foot of the Eiffel Tower. Although the French and German systems employed different line standards, there had existed since 1936 an agreement for technical co-operation between the German firm Telefunken and the French electrical concern, Compagnie des Compteurs. These contacts, which were broken off at the beginning of the war, were re-established in 1941 with an ambitious eight-point plan for developments in the field of television including, among other things, a high-definition system of 1,000 lines and a television receiver with a giant 3 x 4 metre screen. As war became imminent, television screens in Britain and in France went blank but in Berlin the TV service, which had been discontinued under orders from the German High Command (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht) on August 24, 1939, came back on the air on October 2, 1939 with its output increasingly directed towards the entertainment of the wounded in military hospitals. The few television sets in private hands were finally requisitioned for this purpose in 1941.

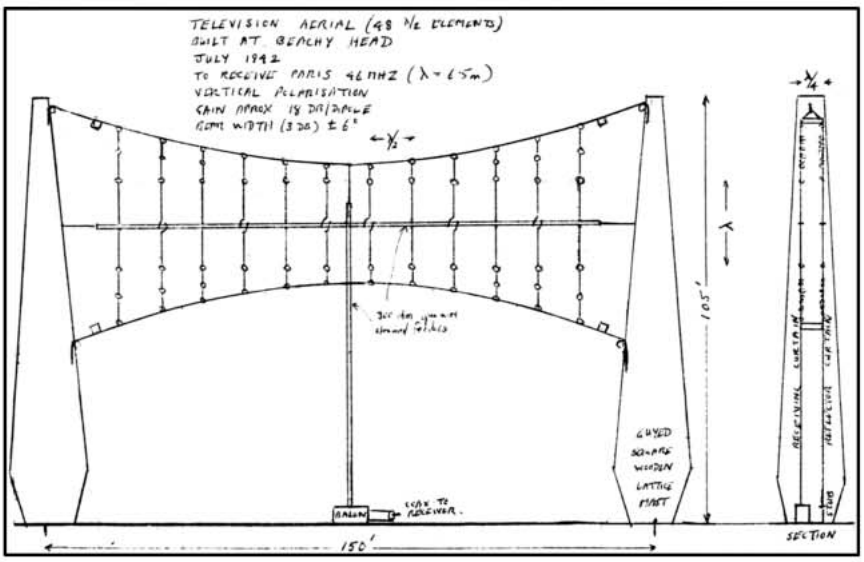
In May 1941, because of a shortage of raw materials, the Höhere Nachrichtenführer, a kind of communications supremo of the occupying forces in France, ordered that the television transmitter and aerials at the Eiffel Tower should be dismantled and placed at the disposal of Telefunken. However, this order was changed following suggestions made by the head of the Propaganda Department of the German military authorities in France acting in concert with senior engineers sent from Germany to supervise the dismantling and a certain Kurt Hinzmann, the pre-war production head of Berlin TV, that the installation could be put to better use transmitting programmes for German military hospitals in the French capital. This argument was also supported by Luftwaffe signals experts who felt that high-powered transmissions of wide bandwidth on television frequencies would interfere with the RAF's navigation aid, Gee.

Originally it was hoped that Telefunken and the Compagnie des Compteurs would re-equip the studios in Paris but when this proved impracticable, the German Post Office (Reichspost) assumed the responsibility and sent over a team of eight or nine technicians who were given the military designation of No. 60 Radio Group (Funkeinsatztrupp 60) and accommodated in the former Czech embassy in the Avenue Charles Floquet, near to the Eiffel Tower. The television transmitter at the Eiffel Tower, which had been damaged by French forces just prior to the fall of Paris, was to be refurbished by the men of FET 60 with assistance from the French Radio Diffusion Nationale, whose personnel included a number of technicians released from German PoW camps for this purpose. The proposed German-French TV Service would transmit using the German standard of 441 lines, a system which was later approved for use in Italy. In direct charge of operations in Paris was Kurt Hinzmann, who held high hopes that this venture would prove to be the beginnings of a European TV network.

Meanwhile in Britain, RN and RAF signals intelligence units were monitoring the VHF and UHF radio spectrum and taking careful note of the frequencies and characteristics of

Kurt Hinzmann, the pre-war production head of German TV, at the German-French television studios in Paris in 1943. A former professional motor-racing driver, Hinzmann was suspected of involvement in the July 1944 plot against Hitler. Charges were laid against him in February 1945 and he spent the final weeks on the run from the Gestapo (K. Hinzmann).

Wing Commander George Kelsey already with pre-war experience of the reception of television pictures from France, led the team of German and French-speaking operators at Beachy Head.

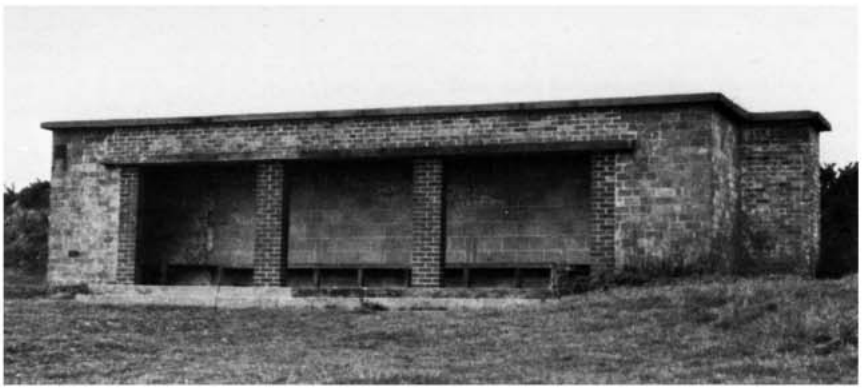


November 7, 1982: Alfred Hunt returns to Beachy Head for the first time since the summer of 1942 when he and George Kelsey received the first signals from the German TV transmitter at the Eiffel Tower. Today, the author's portable multi-standard set brings in excellent pictures from Lille and Boulogne with just a short telescopic aerial: compare this with the massive curtain array which was required to produce pictures for British intelligence during WWII (M. Ockenden).

German radars — essential information for the designers of jamming equipment. In the summer of 1942, WRNS operators at Beachy Head started to pick up weak signals on a frequency of 46 megacycles, quite unlike anything which had previously been monitored. Direction finding gave the point of origin as Paris but even when the output from the receivers was fed into an oscilloscope to produce a trace of the waveform, identification was impossible. (It is important to understand here that an oscilloscope is not a television receiver and will no more produce a TV picture than will the equipment used to monitor heart beats in an intensive-care ward.)

Photographs of the mystery waveform were sent to the Headquarters of RAF No. 60 Signals Group for analysis by Group Captain Proctor-Wilson and his staff, who included Wing Commander George Kelsey, a man with many years of experience in radio and television. Kelsey had started experimenting with wireless during his school days, publishing designs for short wave sets as early as 1926. The 'Kelsey Adaptor', which was featured in the magazine *Wireless Constructor* in February 1931, was claimed to be the first radio-frequency convertor enabling those enthusiasts who built this add-on unit to pick up short wave broadcasts on an ordinary medium wave receiver. 'K', as he was known, later joined the staff of EMI, working on sales and publicity for Marconiphone sets. In 1937, he assisted the EMI research team under Dan Godfrey with experiments into the reception of TV aboard the Cunard White Star liner *Britannic* as she sailed from London to New York via Le Havre and Southampton. On June 26, 1938, following eight months of preparatory work, the same team received the first foreign high-definition television pictures in Britain when they set up a receiver and aerial at the Devil's Dyke Hotel on the South Downs behind Brighton. The *Daily Express*, which had co-operated with Marconiphone in these experiments, headlined the story the following day on page one explaining that the tests had been conducted on a Sunday afternoon because the BBC did not transmit television at that time. The paper predicted optimistically that in a few months' viewers would have a choice of two sets of programmes — London and Paris!

Also at No. 60 Group when the photographs arrived from Beachy Head was Freddy Hunt, then a Squadron Leader working on radar, but before the war the head of the EMI television school for radio dealers at Hayes. Kelsey and Hunt at once realized to their astonishment that the waveforms were television signals and it was decided that they should go immediately to Beachy Head and



The television receivers were installed inside a building located within the perimeter of the No. 60 Group radar station at Beachy Head. No part of the station remains today but a couple of hundred yards to the east there is a graffiti-marked shelter affording magnificent views out over the Channel towards the French coast. This brick building formed part of the control centre of the AA defences for the radar station (M. Ockenden).

In the post-war years, a new radar station was built at Beachy Head slightly to the east of the wartime installation. However, the control rooms were located deep underground and tons of excavated chalk now cover the concrete foundations of the 105-foot masts which supported the television aerial between 1942 and 1944. This second radar station was eventually removed from service, the scanners taken down and the underground chambers sealed off. Now only the guardroom is left above ground and this houses police radio transmitters and equipment used by coastguards for cliff rescue and recovery operations (M. Ockenden).

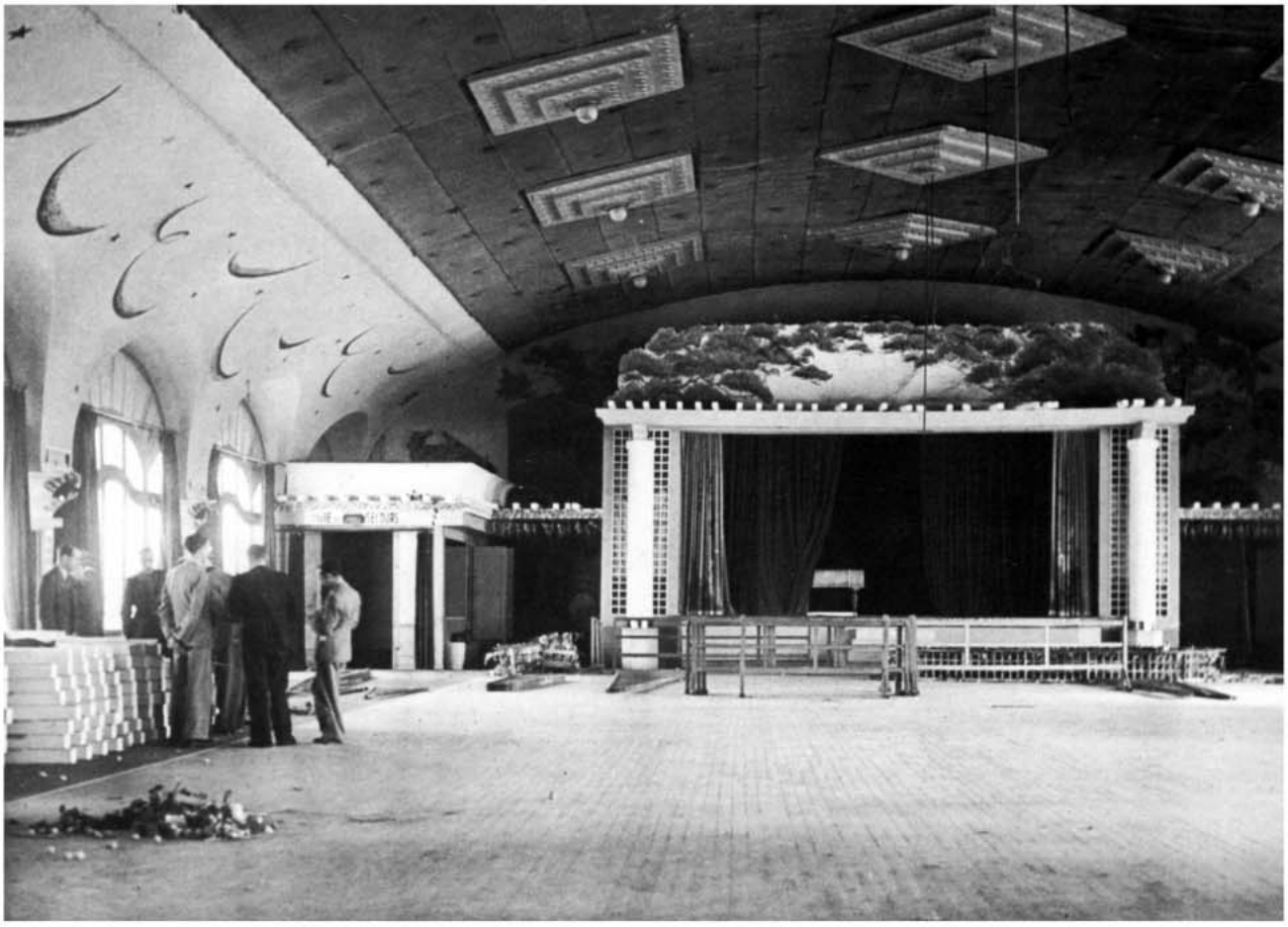
Magic City theatre, the location chosen for new studios, was situated at 180, rue de l'Université, a few hundred metres north from the Czech Embassy studio. The entrance is on the left. Photographed *right* in September 1943 (K. Hinzmann) and *below* in November 1982 by Jean Paul Pallud.

attempt to find out just what was going on over in Paris. On the way they called at EMI to borrow some television sets and aerials but since the project was secret, and as BBC television was off the air, an excuse had to be made that the sets were required for experiments with cathode ray tubes.

At Beachy Head the receivers were installed between the rows of other equipment and the WRNS operators but the first results were disappointing. Although it was a simple matter for the sets to be modified from 405 lines to the German 441 line-standard, interference from RAF Gee navigational aid stations at Hindhead and Truleigh Hill meant that the picture was unstable and spun rapidly round and round. Kelsey returned to EMI to scrounge other aerials with greater directional properties but although the interference was reduced, the peak TV signals were just not strong enough to produce a satisfactory picture. It was clear that a special high-gain aerial would be required to bring the weak signals up to a usable level and the task of designing such a system was given to Flight Lieutenant Frank Brownless, Group Captain Proctor-Wilson's technical investigation officer.

Brownless, who before the war had been with the BBC's technical research department, returned to No. 60 Group and worked out the design for a massive spider's web array which would exclude the interference from the Gee signals and give pin-point horizontal directivity on the Eiffel Tower, while at the same time allowing for a variation in the vertical angle of arrival of the signals at a range of 150 miles. Now living in Melbourne,

Above: **Administration buildings of the Fernsehsender Paris in the adjacent rue Cognacq-Jay with a vehicle belonging to the Hö Na Fü in the foreground. The Höhere Nachrichtenführer was responsible for communications in the occupied zone of France (K. Hinzmann).** *Right:* **Nos. 13-15 today after structural modifications — the centre for French TV news (J. P. Pallud).**



Above: **More used to staging variety performances, this was the Magic City Theatre in 1942 before its conversion into a German television studio (Radio Paris).** *Below:* **First programme went out from the new studio on May 7, 1943 (K. Hinzmann).**

where he retired in 1971 as the Director of Engineering Services for the Australian Broadcasting Commission, Brownless recalls that he was back at Beachy Head four days later with a team of civilian aerial riggers from No. 2 Installation Unit at Kidbrooke, two 105-foot wooden lattice towers and an assortment of RAF radar and communications hardware. His huge curtain array was set up a hundred yards from a steep slope down to the cliff, away from the severe wind turbulence at the edge as well as the barbed wire with its hidden surprises. The riggers worked non-stop during the daylight hours between July 21 and July 24 and the first tests immediately produced a test card showing the Eiffel Tower with the word Fernsehsender Paris (Paris TV Station) superimposed. The aerial remained in service until a September gale blew the whole lot clear away but by then British Intelligence had been convinced that the potential justified its replacement by a more rugged version of the design, materials for which had been prepared in readiness. The project continued under the supervision of George Kelsey with German and French-speaking operators keeping daily watch on the programmes of what was then the largest TV service in the world.

In Paris, Hinzmann and his team set up a provisional studio on the ground floor of their headquarters in the Avenue Charles Floquet. The test card which Kelsey was receiving at Beachy Head was obtained by training a camera through an open window on to the nearby Eiffel Tower. The first programmes were transmitted on January 1, 1943 and initially were on the air only in the afternoons. Then, as more ambitious plans were discussed, it became apparent that additional studio space was needed. Various empty theatres were considered before the Magic City variety theatre in the Rue de l'Université was finally chosen with additional premises in a block of flats in the parallel Rue Cognacq-Jay. Between the two buildings was a large garage which served as a workshop for the construction of scenery and as a store for props and costumes. Over the roof of the garage a wooden bridge was constructed giving easy access between the two main buildings. The accommodation at Magic City was spacious with a large studio (70 x 35 metres) and seating for a studio audience of 300 people. The floor of the studio was carpeted with rubber to enable cameras to be moved silently and, with future expansion in mind, the control room was made large enough to accommodate twenty video monitors. The planning of this studio was carried out in collaboration with the French Radio Diffusion Nationale, who asked for a huge water-filled pool to be installed on the ground floor so that underwater shots and scenes showing boats could be portrayed. On the eighth floor of the building in the Rue Cognacq-Jay was a first class restaurant run by a French couple who served excellent meals at subsidized prices for the German and French staff as well as the twenty or so other nationalities who at different times were at the studios.

The first television programmes from Magic City went out on May 7, 1943 with three to four hours of air-time daily. This was gradually supplemented with ten hours per day of sound radio broadcasts: programmes began at 10 a.m. with closedown at 12.15 a.m. Films were usually shown in the mornings with live drama productions and variety

programmes in the afternoons and evenings before a studio audience. Sports programmes included boxing, with inter-round commentaries by the former world heavyweight champion, Georges Carpentier, and tips for tennis players given by the then-champion of France, Henri Cochet. Hinzmann's head of drama was Peter A. Horn, actor, writer and pre-war TV producer in Germany. Horn found a wealth of talent among the international artists who found themselves in Paris during the war and there were also many actors and musicians in the ranks of Wehrmacht conscripts in the occupied zone. There were also performances at Magic City by touring artists who worked for the German equivalent of the British ENSA.

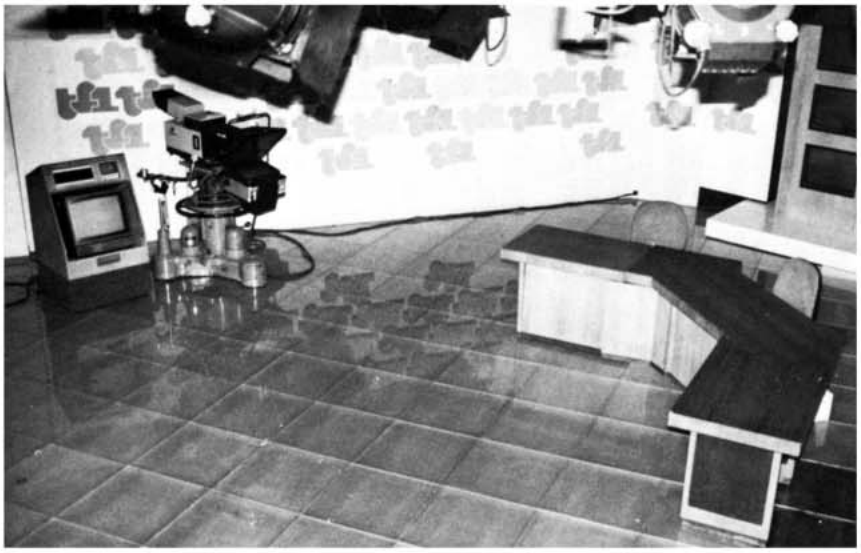
Outside broadcasts were made using two Telefunken cameras which had been specially made for the ill-fated Helsinki Olympics of 1940. Newsreels from Berlin (Wochenschauen) were available for transmission, as was footage taken by men of the German Propaganda Kompagnien (PK Männer). Programmes were in French or German, with programme announcements always made in both languages by two female announcers who sat side by side in front of the camera.

Some 350-400 television receivers operating on the 441 line standard were installed in German military hospitals (and some French civilian hospitals) in the Paris region. These sets were either imported from Germany or were French receivers which had been modified from the pre-war 455 line system. In addition there were between 800-1,000 receivers in private homes; these were largely unmodified and their picture quality was correspondingly poor.

The final broadcast took place on August 16, 1944. Hinzmann's group left Paris on the morning of August 19, ignoring their final orders to blow up the transmitters — an action which could have seriously damaged the Eiffel Tower. Hinzmann's 'deafness' did not go unnoticed in Paris: two years later, in 1946, he was back at the invitation of the French authorities acting as a technical adviser (Conseiller TV) on broadcasting matters. The hand-over from German to French control was carried out in a businesslike and thorough manner with a document dated August 13, 1944. Among other things this provided for the payment of salaries to French employees until August 16 and the settlement of outstanding German debts.

When the story of the British cliff-top receiving station was made public in 1947, it was explained that the newsreel pictures of bomb damage were of great assistance to the RAF. The assumption was that, since the Germans did not know that the pictures were being monitored, the content was not subject to censorship. But although they did not know that their programmes had an English audience, Hinzmann and his French colleagues were well aware that enthusiasts had received the pre-war transmissions from the Eiffel Tower and this fact was discussed and taken into consideration. Shots of damage to industrial sites were always censored from the bulletins although much was made of British raids which resulted in the deaths of women and children. However, even such propaganda film could have been useful, for the RAF did not deliberately set out to bomb civilians and the knowledge that a target was missed can be just as useful as the knowledge that it was hit. Also, those responsible for the gathering of intelligence have an insatiable appetite. While it is an exaggeration to suppose, as was reported in the post-war British press, that Air Ministry chiefs sat down the following day and watched *News-at-Ten*-type footage of the aftermath of Bomber Command's raids, it is not at all surprising that it was felt worthwhile for us to look in on the Germans in Paris during World War Two.

Above: **A group of convalescent German servicemen attend a live broadcast at Magic City (K. Hinzmann).**



Magic City as the Germans knew it disappeared shortly after the war. The interior was split up into two studios with part used for props storage. The studio *(above)* is used for the news programmes of the main French national network, TF1. Note the tele-prompt device fitted in front of the camera; basically a sheet of angled glass on which is projected a scrolling crib-sheet. The camera lens looks straight through without picking up the image and thus the clever newscaster appears to be word perfect. *Below:* The corridor outside the studios is the only part of the original theatre still to be seen. (Our man in Paris Jean Paul Pallud.)

FINLAND 1939-40—THE RAATE ROAD

Investigation No. 3

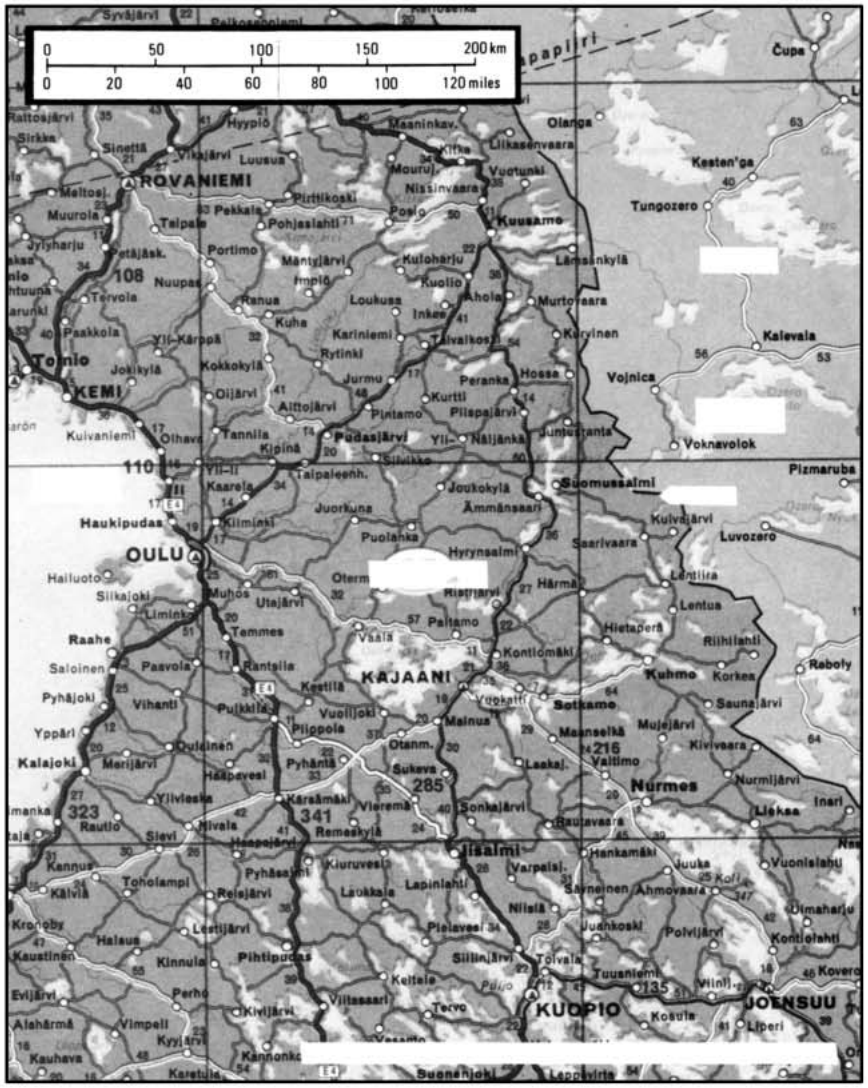
BY DERYK E. WAKEM

Upon the outbreak of war in Europe in September 1939, the Soviet Union occupied eastern Poland under an agreement with Germany. Upon a basis of mutual distrust, the two countries had signed the Russo-German Pact whereby the Soviet Union was to receive manufactured goods and Germany food and raw materials in return.

Following renewed secret negotiations concerning the two countries' respective spheres of influence, the Soviet Union managed to trade parts of eastern Poland in return for German acceptance of Soviet interest in all three Baltic States (not just Estonia and Latvia but also Lithuania which belonged in the German sphere). Treaties were concluded with the three countries and the Soviet Union in October 1939 to guard the Russian western borders.

At the same time, territorial demands were made of Finland, further to protect Russia's northern frontier. When the Finns proved obdurate, the non-aggression pact between the two countries was cancelled. During the hours of darkness on November 30, Russian bombers, based in Estonia, crossed the Gulf of Finland and attacked the Finnish capital, Helsinki. This was the signal for a general attack by Russian land forces across the Finnish border at several places from Karelia in the south to Petsamo in the Arctic Circle.

The Finnish Commander-in-Chief, Finland's grand old man, Field-Marshal Mannerheim, had been prepared for these attacks and had planned accordingly. In Karelia he had ordered the construction of the so-called Mannerheim Line at a time when the Maginot Line and Siegfried Line were discussed in Europe and well-known from numerous propaganda photographs. Mannerheim himself, however, later disclaimed any similarity, largely because of the lack of



Top: **The view from the Finnish defences situated on the southern side across Lake Kianta to the Russian line.**

time available to construct deep, interconnected concrete tunnels and gun positions. What the Finnish engineers had tried to do was to produce a loose system of defence in considerable depth which would allow the smaller Finnish forces to retreat before the numerically superior and heavily armoured Russian thrusts, and hope to slow down the impetus at least until the lower temperatures and heavy snowfalls completed the task of stopping the Russian advance into Karelia.

In the Karelian isthmus the plan began to work during the first week of December as the Finns fought back doggedly. At other places along the frontier much the same was happening. However, at Suomussalmi, in the centre of Finland, Mannerheim was surprised by the advance of the Russian Ninth Army which he had not expected. Here, at the narrowest part of the country, there lay a wilderness region which extended to both sides of the frontier, but what Mannerheim did not know was that the Russians had constructed an all-weather military road which was capable of delivering an army to the Finnish border.

From Suomussalmi it was intended to break out of the wilderness and utilize the Finnish road system to cross the bare hundred miles to the port of Oulu, thus cutting the country in half and neutralizing the reserves stationed at Oulu. Finally it was realized that this would also prevent any further help in the way of men and materiel from coming overland from Sweden. The Suomussalmi area was thinly defended by reservists and the local equivalent of the Territorial Army. Experienced soldiers, but few in number.

The Russian armoured column, supported by fighters and bombers, crossed the line and travelled rapidly down both the Raate Road and the road through Juntusranta. The defending forces returned their fire and then fell back along the self-same roads, along with fleeing farmers and their families.

To gain a picture of the retreat it is perhaps necessary to try to imagine the weather and the country at that time. Many farms had already been evacuated and buildings were now burned to deny shelter to invading troops. The few roads were snow-covered and transport was by horse-drawn sleigh. Movement off the roads was too slow in the thick spruce woods and the refugees kept going just ahead of the Russians. Temperatures at night were by that time down to minus 20°C.

Within twenty-four hours the two Russian columns had joined forces in the country village of Suomussalmi and were gathering themselves for the breakout. Meanwhile a Finnish battalion of reservists had arrived by rail at Hyrynsalmi from Oulu and was marching the twenty-five miles to the battle. Following them was to come the 27th Infantry Regiment of regular troops. All these reinforcements joined the local troops and dug in along the southern shore of Kiantajarvi, a large lake system to the south of Suomussalmi. Fortunately at this time the ice on the lakes was unable to support the weight of tanks or vehicles and all the ferries had been destroyed and no bridges existed.

The Finnish lake shore line, although hastily conceived and executed, was strong enough to withstand the passage of time and much of it still exists today. Basically a line of trenches was dug thirty or forty yards back from the shore, protected by a line of granite boulders on the lake margin. A small quarry was excavated to provide rock to construct dragon's teeth, with an outlet to the lake to allow the material to be sledged out. Here and there machine gun posts were constructed for the old Maxim guns which the Finnish army was using. Elsewhere to the rear, dugouts, lined with logs and roofed with rocks and earth, were built to give protection against weather and artillery fire.

As Mannerheim himself pointed out, if the Finns had been surprised by the secret military road, the Russians themselves were equally surprised by the railway to Hyrynsalmi which had only just been completed. This meant that Finnish reserves from Oulu could

This quarry was the one used to provide rock for the dragon's teeth for the waterside obstacles.

Many of the Finnish defensive earthworks still survive — in the event the Russians were held from crossing the lake by thin ice.

Although its field of fire is now obscured by trees, this machine gun emplacement, one of the many in the area, is itself remarkably preserved.

This dugout, with the addition of a new door, is still useful.

be in the Suomussalmi area within two days whereas the Russians had assumed there would be a delay of perhaps four or five days.

The local commander, Colonel Hjalmar Siilasvuo, now began to make his counter-attack with elements of the Finnish 9th Division. On December 11, Finnish troops on skis trekked eastwards, parallel to the Soviet line and then turned north again to cut the Raate road. Having straddled the road they left two companies to guard the rear, well situated on an isthmus between two water-ways. The main body then turned westwards once again and began to roll up the Russian forces from the rear towards Suomussalmi. By the evening of December 12 the Finns had reached the centre of the village where the defenders put up a very spirited resistance with artillery and a large number of armoured vehicles.

For five days, with heavy snowfalls and the temperature down to —40°C, the two armies fought at extremely close quarters. In spite of having no artillery or anti-tank weapons, the Finns managed to take most of the village on the ridge by December 15 and also bottle up the Russian 163rd Division on Hulkonniemi, a peninsula to the west of the village.

It was at this juncture that disturbing reports reached Colonel Siilasvuo to the effect that a fresh column was approaching the rearguard holding the Raate road. The companies detailed to hold the position were successful on the first attack and were preparing to repel the next when the miracle occurred. General Vinogradov, commanding the 44th Division, mistook the Finnish snipers for a superior force and stopped. A traffic jam was thus created and the column became bogged down along the Raate road. Held to the narrow earth road, with dense coniferous forest coming down to the verges, their superior fire-power was useless except at the very front and so the column waited, helpless in the snow.

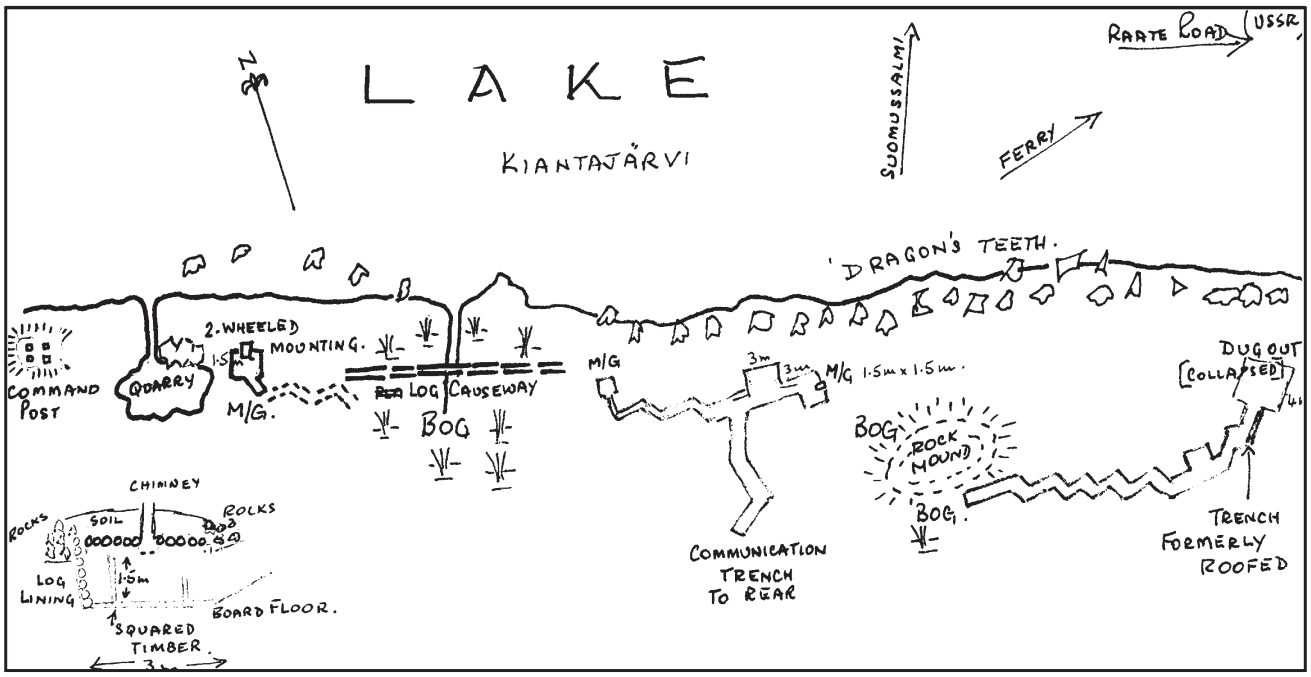
On the 16th Colonel Siilasvuo received a battery of artillery to strengthen his hand — the first he was to receive — and two days later two anti-tank guns arrived. Then, on the 25th, came a real Christmas present — in the shape of five battalions of infantry. These reinforcements came at an opportune moment, for the beleagured Russians were preparing once again to break out of their confinement and resume the advance. For two more days the Russians fought hand to hand, supported whenever possible by Soviet fighters and bombers. Supplies were also dropped from the air, often going to the wrong side, but welcomed by the Finns.

On December 27 Russian resistance collapsed and the Finns were rewarded with the sight of troops, black against the snow and ice, fleeing northwards across the lake, back towards Juntusranta. The Finns in their trenches south of Kiantajarvi were only frustrated by the fact that their small arms did not have the range to deal effectively with the retreating enemy. The artillery batteries were being used on Hulkonniemi, where the Soviet troops were being systematically pounded until they too broke, leaving some 5,000 dead and 500 prisoners.

This now left the Raate Road and the 44th Division. Here, 18,000 troops and some forty tanks were still bogged down, restricted to patrol activity. Colonel Siilasvuo now produced his final plan of action. Dividing up his remaining forces, he made a concerted effort to cut the 44th off from any reinforcements from across the border. He then cut the line at several more points into sections that he called 'mottis', a motti being a cord of firewood ready cut up and neatly wired into a parcel for use on the Finnish stoves.

Using a parallel route to the Raate road, Siilasvuo established a series of assembly areas for his troops where they could receive food and shelter between attacks. Each section of the Russian troops, tanks, guns, lorries, field kitchens and troop carriers was systematically destroyed by the ski troops coming silently out of the forests. This was what the Russians called 'belaya smert' or the White Death and often involved the use of the Finnish hunting knife. The combination of rapid movement on skis, the use of camouflaged white suits and the absolute silent approach demoralized the waiting Russians. The few prisoners who were taken were marched back to Hyrynsalmi and put on board cattle trucks for the journey down to Oulu. Temperatures had now reached —46°C, a record low for many years. Even minor wounds became lethal under these conditions and men froze at their posts. Everything was left to the Finns, tanks, guns, ammunition and over 1,000 horses. The Russian casualties were impossible to count as further falls of snow covered everything, but very few managed to double back into Russia.

All part of the hastily-constructed defence line, other dugouts have collapsed as the supporting timbers have rotted.



Sketch of the December 1939 defences beside Lake Kianta near Suomussalmi inspected by Deryk Wakem in August 1981.

To understand how the minor Finnish force could defeat such a large and well-armed body of troops it is necessary to pause again and strike a balance sheet of the factors involved.

In favour of the Russian invaders one must first take into account the great element of surprise and the size of the attacking forces. Secondly the Russians took advantage of the relatively new art of close cover from the air provided during the daylight hours. Also their highly mechanized equipment, including tanks, together with field kitchens which were capable of providing ample hot meals under arduous conditions.

On the side of the Finnish troops lay the short number of hours of daylight available, getting shorter every day as the month of December wore on. Added to this was the increasing depth of snow which slowed down the Russian armour yet actually permitted the Finnish infantry greater freedom of movement across country. The Finn is almost born on cross-country skis which are ideal for travelling in this woodland. Every man in the original defence force was a local man, an experienced woodsman, well able to look after himself. They were all experienced rifle shots and hunters of deer and elk. An encyclopaedic knowledge of the local area gained from these hunting trips also stood them in good stead.

The continuous low temperatures affected both Finns and Russians alike, but the Finns were used to being out in such weather. The lack of roads did not hold them up and the slowness of the rivers and lakes to freeze hard enough to support vehicles was also a point in their favour. The lack of buildings for shelter affected the Russians more than it did the travelling Finns and Russian casualties often died by freezing beneath the snow. Finally the existence of the nearby railway meant that reinforcements were rapidly deployed.

The only weapons the Finns had beside the rifle, machine gun and the new Suomi sub-machine gun, were hastily improvised Molotov Cocktails in their glass bottles, small explosive charges and logs which were used to wrench tracks off tanks.

By January 8 it was all over and some 27,000 Russians lay dead. Only 1,300 prisoners were taken. Field-Marshal Mannerheim promoted Hjalmar Siilasvuo to Brigadier-General and paid tribute to him in his post-war memoirs by recording the boldness of tactics and the undoubted toughness of the Finnish infantryman.

In summer, forty-three years later, it is difficult to perceive the carnage which took place along this simple earthen road between Raate and Suomussalmi. Here virtually an entire Russian division perished . . . and here they remain buried still today . . . in unmarked mass graves at the roadside.

Siilasvuo himself stated that the victories of Suomussalmi were instrumental in stiffening Finnish resistance on other fronts by their example and this is recorded on the war memorial designed by the great Finnish architect and sculptor, Alvar Aalto. This memorial, depicting a giant flame blown from the east but not extinguished, stands to the south of Suomussalmi, half-way between the village and the Finnish defence line.

Thereafter General Siilasvuo turned his attention southwards to a similar situation at Kuhmo where yet another Russian division, the 54th, was pinned down on a road. Incidentally, the Russian general of the 44th was executed in Russia, ostensibly for the 'loss of fifty-five Field Kitchens'!

The Finnish war cemetery at Suomussalmi. In the background the only original tree to survive, finally killed off during the winter of 1981/82.

Today the village of Raate is a mere hamlet, now inhabited largely by the Finnish Frontier Force and a wide area of countryside is designated as a buffer zone towards the Soviet Union. During the summer months of 1981 and 1982 I visited the area of the Raate road campaign and, accompanied by a Reserve officer, Timo Tuokku, we covered more or less the whole campaign and talked to a veteran ski soldier, Arvo Hiltunen, in his farmhouse close to the USSR border.

We spent several days camped on the Kiantajarvi defence line and traced its course along the lake shore. Every trench, dugout and machine gun post was clearly visible. The dragon's teeth now stand in the water as the level of the lake is higher today than it was in 1939. The peat bog in the centre of the line is still crossed by a split pine log causeway.

The village of Suomussalmi has been entirely rebuilt since the war and only two features remain from former days. At the crossroads in the centre stands a small shed, about five feet tall, strongly constructed of thick timber and metal sheeting. An inscription on it indicates that it formerly housed explosives used in road construction and it is the only building that has survived. Close by, in the new church grounds stands a birch tree, also a survivor, and although it had leaves in 1981, by the summer of 1982 it had finally died.

In the churchyard itself stands the war memorial with 284 graves in front of it. It must be remembered that these are all local men from a relatively unpopulated frontier region as by far the larger number of casualties were returned for burial in their home towns after the war.

The furthest point reached by the Russian advance is marked with a granite block with the inscription 'The advance of the enemy was stopped here during the Winter War, December 9, 1939'. A mile away stands the imposing monument by Alvar Aalto depicting a flame blown by a wind from the east. Below it lies a bronze, three-dimensional map of the campaign and an inscription by General Siilasvuo: 'Many brave soldiers bought the victories of Suomussalmi with their heart's blood. They showed the road of glory to the people, which was full of hardship, but the only way.'

On the Raate road itself, beside a small river, stands another stone, erected to the memory of two Finnish soldiers who were friends coming from the same province to the

Left: **Arvo Hiltunen, veteran soldier of the Winter War, outside the house that his family had to abandon to the advancing Russians. The house was saved largely because it was used as a hospital and finally a repository for Russian dead.** *Above:* **The Raate Road Memorial stands in front of the farm. Timo Tuokku guided Deryk Wakem around the battlefield.**

The reality of fighting a 'scorched earth' campaign. *Left:* **Pathetic chimney stacks are all that remain of abandoned farm houses.**

Right: **The only building in Suomussalmi itself to survive is this tiny pock-marked shed, formerly used to store explosives.**

south. The inscription reads: 'The brothers in arms from Mantta, Sulo Aalto - 26.12.1939 Erkki Hultunen - 4.1.1940'.

Also on the Raate road, nearer to the border zone, stands yet another memorial topped with a Finnish helmet of the period which was, of course, the German issue of an earlier time. This memorial inscription runs as follows: 'This memorial was placed on the Raate road in commemoration of the glorious battles of the wilderness warriors of 1939-1940'.

Behind it stand the farm buildings belonging to a much decorated veteran of the campaign, Arvo Hiltunen. Arvo, now aged sixty-three, had been a young soldier at the time and his family had abandoned the farm and fled westwards. On his first return to the house after the Russian defeat he found that only the walls remained and yet it had been used as a Russian hospital. He showed us where the piles of bodies inside on improvised bunks reached up to seven or eight feet high. These and many others he and his companions buried beside the road. Each mass burial was marked temporarily with a sign recording just the bare facts: '14 horses and 57 men'. These burial places are now no longer marked and the precise locations are difficult to determine with accuracy yet as they hold almost 18,000 bodies they must be relatively close together.

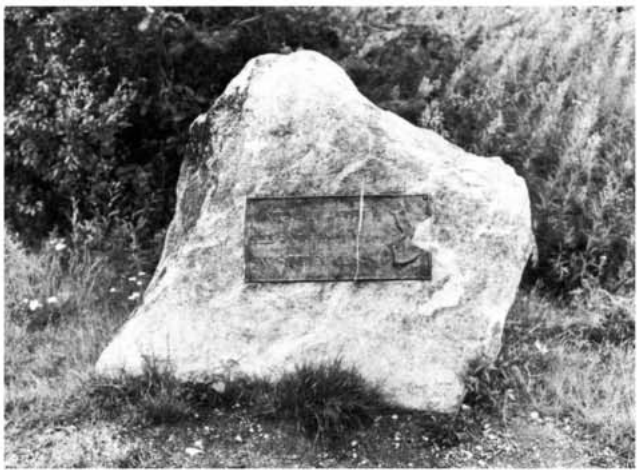
In the Continuation War, when the Finns, aided by the Germans, counter-attacked into Russian territory and cut the vital Murmansk railway to the north at several points, Arvo Hiltunen continued to fight, penetrating far into Russia on ski patrols.

His house, with a new roof, is constructed in a very modern Scandinavian style. A huge oven dominates the large living room and a deep-freeze holds stocks of food for the winter days when they are cut off from the nearest town, Suomussalmi. On the wall is the head of a massive elk, shot by Arvo's father. He proudly points out that, from its ear-markings, it was a Russian-owned animal which was ill-advised to stray across the border! We asked Arvo if he felt at all apprehensive at living so close to the Russian border (at this point only seven kilometres away) but he explained that as his family had lived there for so many generations it did not occur to him to leave.

North-westwards, on Hulkonniemi, the wild character of the country is well evident and the memorial here records that, 'This memorial

Alvar Aalto's memorial to the Winter War depicting the flame of Finland blown by a wind from the east, yet not extinguished.

The furthest point reached by the Russian forces on December 9 is marked by this memorial stone. Here the Finns made their stand and from here they began the series of counter-attacks.



A memorial on the Raate road to two young Finnish soldiers from Mantta. Vandals have been at work on the map of Finland even in that remote area.

stone was brought from Satakunta and erected by the 6th Armoured Car Brigade at Parola. At this place the enemy's retreat road was cut during the last days of 1939'.

A visit to the battlefield in high summer forty years later makes it difficult to comprehend how hostile the terrain is in winter, covered in snow with sub-zero temperatures. Also ground which in 1940 gave open fields of fire is today covered with substantial trees.

Timo Tuokku showed us the line of defences which the Finns had built later in the event of a German withdrawal and another invasion from Russia. With forethought, these lines used the country to its best advantage. Cliffs, waterways and lakes were linked by trenches and strong points. Banks of rivers were revetted with tall pine logs to prevent tank attacks. Behind the lines, tent circles still show in the woods where the Finnish circular tents were erected and protected by earth banks.

There is nowhere along the Raate road that does not have its quota of trenches and foxholes, evidence of the Russian attempts to protect the surrounded 44th division. Finnish hunters in the woods still find Russian remains and especially steel helmets, lost for forty years. The Raate road is still an earth track, winding through the wilderness, with a few farm clearings close to the road. Several gaunt chimney stacks show where once farms existed in 1939 although the clearings are now overgrown with the encroaching forest.

In this wilderness on Hulkonniemi, a peninsula north-west of Suomussalmi, the Russian 163rd Division was decimated. The memorial is to the Finnish 6th Armoured Car Brigade — in the background the Russian border zone.

DINAH RECOVERY IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

BY STAN GAJDA

Wartime attacks by the Japanese on the Northern Territory of Australia are generally well known and Darwin itself was attacked by enemy aircraft on at least sixty-three occasions. Damage to installations and aircraft was severe and many lives were lost in the Territory before Allied offensives drove the Japanese back and out of reach of the Australian mainland.

Little known are the Japanese air strikes on other Australian states and, in fact, Western Australia saw more enemy air activity during World War II than any of the other Australian states except for the Northern Territory.

One such air attack was on Broome and was described in *After the Battle No. 28*. Various coastal towns in Western Australia came under bombing or strafing attacks on at least eleven occasions between 1942 and 1944. Sightings of enemy fighters and reconnaissance aircraft were common, with planes sometimes coming over towns one day after the next for extended periods. The only loss to the Japanese up to 1944 over Western Australia was an A6M2 Zero, shot down by ground fire over Broome on March 3, 1942.

Until 1944 the Japanese seemed to have Western Australian skies more or less to themselves, the main reason for this being that the north-western area had no adequate defensive measures until after the threat of a Japanese invasion had passed. Drysdale River Mission (now known as Kalumburu Mission) was attacked and levelled on September 17, 1943 by a force of twenty-one 'Lily' bombers and a number of escorting fighters from Penfui (Timor), ostensibly to put the Allied unsealed airstrip out of order a mile away from the mission. (It was not damaged.)

After this raid a sealed airstrip was built by American and Australian forces on the Anjo Peninsula, twenty-six miles north-west from the mission, and was named Truscott airfield, after 'Bluey' Truscott who was killed in a flying accident at Exmouth, Western Australia, on March 28, 1943. When this new aerodrome became operational it was used by B-24s, B-25s and Beaufighters for launching raids against the Japanese in the East Indies, and as a staging base for returning aircraft.

To protect this strip against intruding enemy aircraft, various Spitfire squadrons based around Darwin would take turns in providing air cover at Truscott for about a month at a time during operations. During July 1944, No. 54 Squadron (RAF) was at Truscott and a Japanese aircraft began making regular runs over the strip. On July 3, 11 and 19, Spitfires were scrambled to intercept the intruder but each time it managed to escape. On July 20, 1944, three Spitfires — A58-312, A58-390 and A58-329, piloted by D. M. Gossland, F. Meakin and A. E. Knapp respectively, scrambled at 8.50 a.m. after being warned by the long distance radar station at Cape Leveque, 300 miles to the west, of an approaching hostile aircraft. As the Spitfires desperately struggled to gain height, the Japanese plane, a 'Dinah', continued heading directly for Drysdale at

Members of 'A' and 'B' Flights of No. 54 Squadron on duty at Truscott airstrip in July 1944 — 'A' Flight outside the Mess tent (via P. Pinkerton).

about 27,000 feet. Soon it was visible by personnel at Truscott and even the crew from the mobile radar set near the base stepped outside to watch the combat. Two of the Spitfires finally caught up with the Dinah directly over Truscott airfield.

The following extract from No. 54 Squadron's unit history describes the action:

'Squadron's detachment at Drysdale (sic) consisted of F/Lt. Gossland, F/Lt. Meakin and F/Sgt. Knapp. They were scrambled at 0850 hours. F/Sgt. Knapp was vectored to Drysdale Mission. F/Lt. Gossland and F/Lt. Meakin sighted a Dinah approaching Drysdale strip at 27,000 feet. As they approached the enemy aircraft from astern, Dinah was seen to drop clusters of aerial fragmentation bombs, which burst below and behind our aircraft. F/Lt. Gossland made his attack from 7 o'clock on the port stern quarter, and his burst was seen to strike the port side of the fuselage, port wing and both engines. The Dinah went into a steep dive. F/Lt. Meakin fired a burst and the starboard wing broke away and the Dinah burst into flames and crashed into the sea five miles north of Drysdale strip.'

Mr. K. H. Backshall, an ex-RAAF radar sergeant, describes what he saw:

'I was a sergeant in the RAAF attached to No. 154 Radar Station at Truscott airstrip at the time of this incident. We were operating a ground-controlled interception radar unit from a mobile base just north of the airstrip and were part of a radar defence system of the area. On the morning of the raid the early warning station situated at Cape Leveque passed a message that an unidentified plane was approaching the coast and our station was placed on alert.

'The equipment we had was relatively new and had an effective range of only fifty miles. It was capable of giving a screen projection of the target and the interceptors and also could calculate the height of the target to within 100 feet. The operation was handled by two radar operators with a pilot as Flight Controller. The controller was in radio contact with the fighter planes and in fact it was he who scrambled the Spitfires and gave them flight details progressively to ensure them intercepting the Japanese plane before it reached Drysdale strip.

'As far as I can remember the controller was Flight Lieutenant Mailey who was a son of the former test cricketer Arthur Mailey. We received a "tally ho" from the Spitfires when the Dinah was slightly north of our base and we went outside the vans to watch the dogfight.

'It was a very short lived affair and the Dinah was soon in flames and diving earthwards. It crashed in the ocean some miles north of the camp and was in fact found by an Australian airman at low tide that day. He removed the compass and camera from the wreckage and then reported the find.

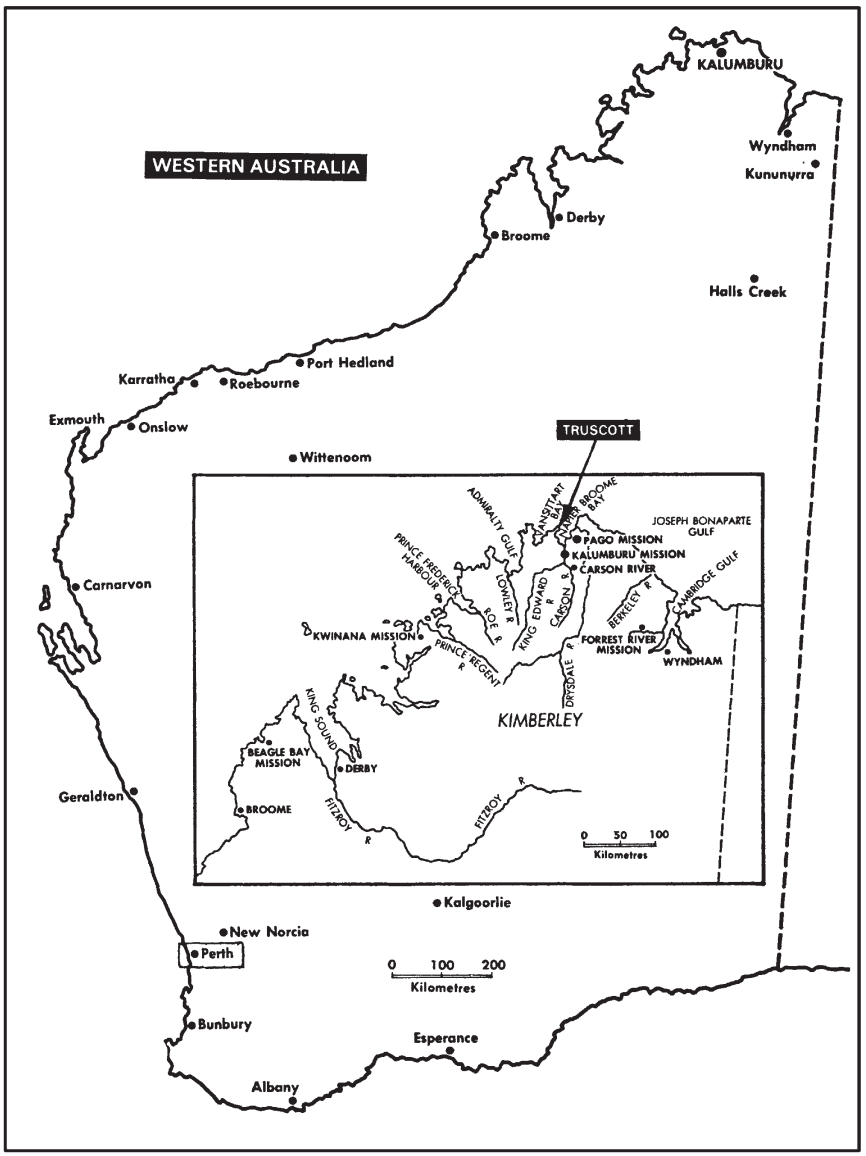
'A salvage crew arrived several days later and recovered the wreck for investigation, and the camera and compass were also taken from the airman.'

It seems ironic that the first aerial victory over Western Australia was also to be the last enemy aircraft destroyed over Australia.

Mr. W. R. L. Vivian was one of the salvage crew that recovered the Dinah wreckage and below is an extract from his letter:

'I belonged to an advanced party of five, attached to Marine Section Darwin, sent north. The party consisted of Flying Officer F. Cable in charge, Corporal A. Sloan, LAC Walker, LAC Brunke, LAC R. Parry and myself. Brunke and myself of the Marine Section were sent north in a workboat towing a 40ft dumb barge with lifting gear on. We located the wreck just covered by water at high water spring tide. It took Bill and myself two days and two nights working continually to recover the wreck for towing to Flying Officer Cable some miles away at Truscott (West Bay

Scrub encroaching on the wartime strip on the Anjo Peninsula on the northern coast of Western Australia. Taken looking north-west, the mobile radar was located at the far end and the Dinah came down in the sea out of the picture to the left.



landing beach). We did not at any stage see any bodies, only several scraps. On arrival back Flying Officer Cable asked for silk parachutes, cameras, etc. We did not see any. On account of the remoteness of the place, we mentioned that someone could have been before us, but I don't think so.'

The West Australian Aviation Museum first became aware of the shooting down of a Japanese aircraft over Drysdale Mission in 1978 when the story came to light in an old issue of *Wings* magazine, which was the RAAF's official magazine during World War II. A brief account of this action was also found in G. Odger's *Air War Against Japan 1943-45*.

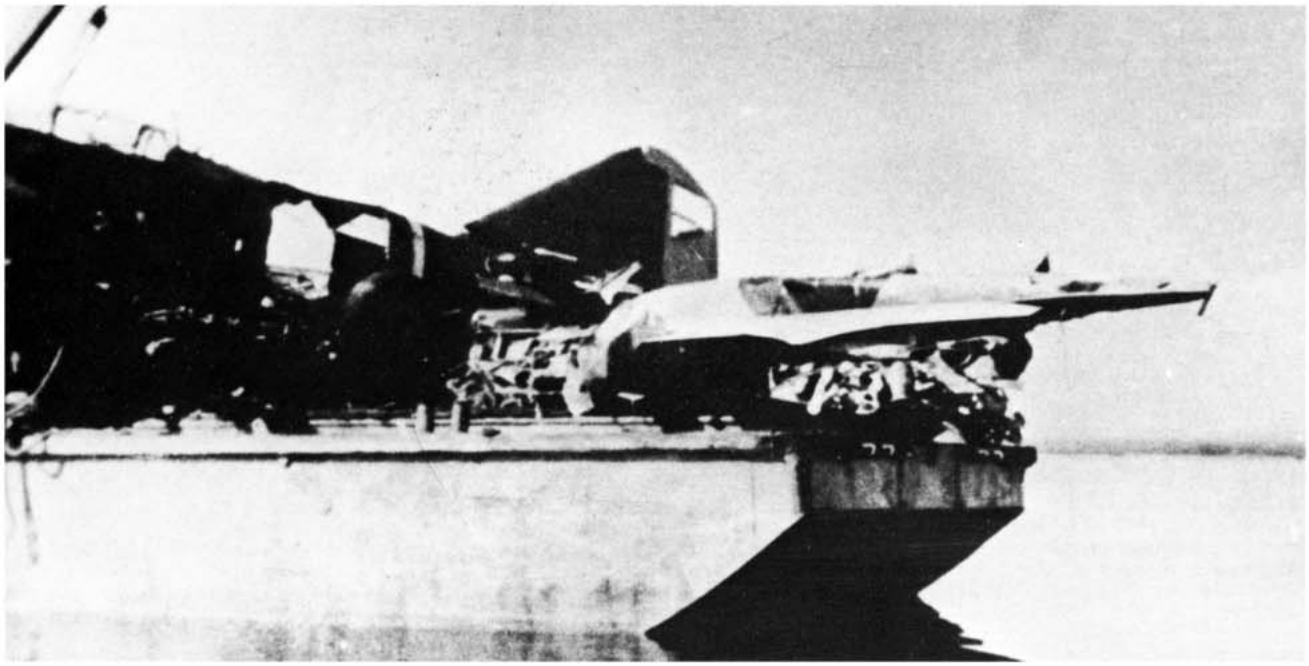
A letter to the RAF archives in England resulted in a copy from No. 54 Squadron's Operation Record Book, although the place of action was wrongly and misleadingly given as over Drysdale airstrip.

The next clue in the search for the crash site came when Graham Springbett and John Hardie came across some wreckage in the bush near Truscott airfield while on a flying visit to the area. They had thought that the wreckage was part of an American P-38 Lightning and it was quickly forgotten. Because all reports tended to suggest that the Dinah had come down in the Drysdale area, the idea of this newly found wreckage as possibly being from the Dinah was discounted. Nevertheless, photos taken at Truscott in 1979 by Hardie did show some similarities in Dinah construction. Therefore a close first-hand examination of the aircraft remains needed to be made for a positive identification.

The opportunity for this came during 1980 when a large party of military enthusiasts made a two-week expedition to Truscott in July. By coincidence, the first positively identified Dinah parts were found on July 20, 1980 — exactly thirty-six years to the day since the Dinah's destruction.

At a location near West Bay, a large amount of Dinah wreckage was found; by all appearances, this is where the aircraft was taken apart for technical evaluation during the war. The best find here was a section of port wing which comprised of the whole flap and part of the engine nacelle fairing. Bullet holes in this section tallied up with the account from the No. 54 Squadron records. Inside the flap Japanese characters in pencil were found. These were later translated into '1059 Left'. Although this is possibly the serial

Mitsubishi Ki-46 tactical reconnaissance aircraft known to the Allied air forces as the Dinah — that of the 70th Independant Flying Squadron brought down near Truscott was the last Japanese aircraft to be destroyed over Australia in the Second World War.



Above: **The wreckage being transported to dry land in July 1944. There is one noticeable omission: the fuselage insignia — the red hinomaru — has been cut out as a unique souvenir (via Mervyn Prime).** *Below:* **The same 'meat ball' — the pile of bottles would suggest some form of celebration! (via P. Pinkerton)**

Top: **The fuselage section with the port wing found beside the track from West Bay to the airstrip.** *Below:* **Port flap and fuel tank.**

number of the plane, confirmation has not been possible. Other items found here included a fuel tank, an oil tank, the windscreen framework, the control column, engine cowling gills and a propeller boss.

The other major piece of Dinah wreckage was located some three miles further on from West Bay and this was found to be a section of fuselage about nine feet long, from the control column mounting to the rear. The upper half of the fuselage was missing. A major portion of the port wing was still fixed to the fuselage and the undercart was still folded up inside the wheel well. There was also much evidence of fire. An identifying feature frequently found throughout the wreckage was the three diamond cluster — the Mitsubishi trademark that is still used to this day.

After much effort the 13ft by 4ft flap section was brought twenty-six miles by boat and four-wheel drive vehicle across to Kalumburu Mission and then loaded onto a truck for Derby. The Dinah relic eventually arrived in Perth in October 1980, after a trip by road of 2,200 miles, and is now on display in the West Australian Museum at Bateman.

The past superintendant of Kalumburu Mission, Father Seraphim Sanz, remembers the Dinah incident and saw the wreckage on the beach at West Bay at the time during a visit to the base. He recalls that one of the Japanese crew was found dead on the ground near Vansitaart Bay after parachuting from the burning aircraft. He was told that the other crewman was killed in the wreck. He also saw an RAAF airman 'running around Truscott' with a Japanese automatic pistol (he was allowed to hold it) from the Dinah, and later he made a number of women's hair clasps from the metal skin of this aircraft.

The War History Office, Tokyo, Japan confirmed that:

'On July 20, 1944, a Dinah was engaged in reconnaissance against Drysdale and it did not return. This plane belonged to the 70th Independant Flying Squadron under the 7th Flying Division. The crew were: pilot — Army Lt. Kiyoshi Iizuka, observer — Army Lt. Hisao Itoh.'

Susumyu Akasaka, a former Japanese Army Air Force captain from 70 Fcs, provided these additional details:

'The aircraft was a Type 100 Tactical Reconnaissance Type 2 (1940) Ki-46 Dinah. It was from the DAI 70 Chutai of the DAI 7 Hikoshidan based at Koepang, Timor. The flight was made to check the Drysdale Mission area for reference purposes. This kind of reconnaissance was done about once a month to check Allied military movements from the south. A simultaneous reconnaissance was carried out by another aircraft on Broome and Derby and this plane returned safely. Altogether eight reconnaissance planes were lost over North Australia (Darwin), from 1942 to 1944 and this is the first time Dinah relics from this group (70 Fcs.) have been discovered'.

Efforts to track down the Spitfire pilots who took part in the action have been unsuccessful. However, it has been discovered that Meakin lost his life in a flying accident at his base at Livingstone only eight days after his success over Truscott. No. 54 Squadron ORB records that:

'F/Lt. Meakin was killed on 28th July, 1944 near Livingstone (N.T.) airstrip in an accident. His Spitfire struck a tree and exploded soon after take-off. He was buried at the Adelaide River War Cemetery on 29th July, 1944. He was 23 years of age and was within three weeks of completing his tour of duty in the North Western Area.'

From the Editor . . .

One of the most noticeable trends over the past five years or so has been the re-emergence of the organised battlefield tour. Touring battlefields is certainly not new yet it still has not reached the proportions it did in the years following the ending of the First World War. In the 1920s the travel firms of Thomas Cook & Son and Dean and Dawson were rivals, Cook's 1924 offering including 'First class travel tickets, Pullman car seats in England, superior hotel accommodation, gratuities, private automobile tour and the services of an ex-officer in the capacity of courier.' The Ypres League organised tours from the appropriately-named Trois Tours chateau at Brielen, and school parties were taken round the battlefields when, on reaching say, Verdun, a French general would be on hand to explain the course of the conflict.

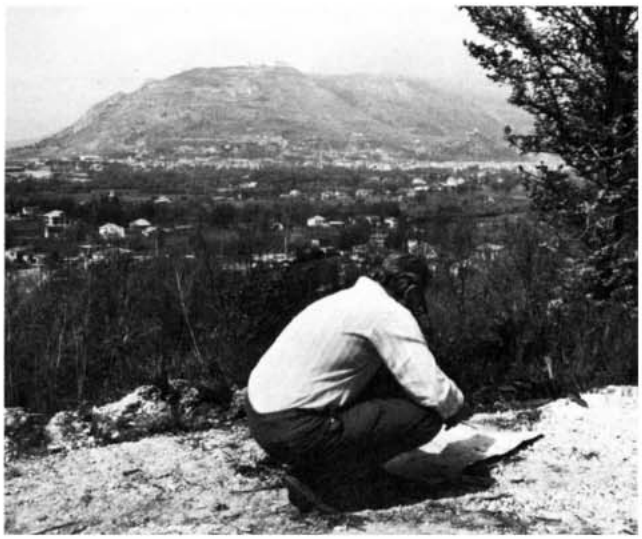
However, it seems to me that two things above all other were responsible for the huge post-war influx of visitors to France and Belgium: the construction of the new war cemeteries by the then Imperial War Graves Commission and the upsurge in motor car ownership. *The Times* correspondent, reporting on the first completed cemetery in an article in September 1920, said 'I write for those whose men, dead in battle, who now rest there, where they gave their lives. . . . I have just seen the first finished cemetery, and it is the most perfect, the noblest, the most classically beautiful memorial that any loving heart or any proud nation could desire to their heroes fallen in a foreign land.' No wonder after reading such reports that many wanted to see them for themselves.

To cater for the new, wheeled tourist came the Michelin Tyre Company of Clermont-Ferrand and their production of illustrated guides to the battlefields. Published in 1919-20, and dedicated to the memory of company employees who had been killed in the war, all profits were donated to the Committee for the Repopulation of France. Around twenty different volumes were produced in English and French covering the various campaigns on the Western Front — the Marne, Yser, the Hindenburg Line, Somme, Ypres, Verdun, and Rheims, and also the American areas of participation as well as town guides on Amiens, Soissons and Lille. Clearly defined routes steered the pilgrim around the still-ruined villages and copious illustrations showed the tourist what he or she could expect to see. No comparable guidebook series was published after the Second War yet the validity of these WWI guides today is indicated by the Verdun volume being available once again in reprint form at the Office de Tourisme in the city.

Whether the lack of interest in battlefield touring after the Second War was as a result of the austerity of the late 1940s, or just that the vast majority of the population had seen enough of a war which had been brought directly to their homes by the advance of technology in the air, is difficult to determine. Of course there are many individuals and veteran's associations who made their own way to their particular corner of a foreign field but the organised tour for civilians only surfaced again in the mid-1970s. Several travel companies put a toe in the water and offered one-off trips but for some reason failed to get the formula right and did not repeat them. Certainly it must be difficult to cater for all levels of interest and I have had my brains picked on a number of occasions by tour operators wanting to formulate itineraries.

I accept the fact that after some twenty-five years of travelling the battlefields I must be at least a little biased but to me the sort of tours possible fall into one of four groups.

At the top must come the Army type, usually only open to servicemen on specific courses, and aimed to teach the 'lessons learned'. For example the Staff College at Camberley covered three different phases of the Normandy battles in their annual visit to France: Operation Goodwood, the 50th



We had the best of both worlds in 1976 when Colonel John Green gave us an army-style battlefield tour but to us alone. Here the

Colonel orients his map on Monte Trocchio overlooking the Liri valley. Cassino in the background.

The military vehicle tour has found growing support since the first visit to Normandy by the Military Vehicle Conservation Group in 1974. Enthusiasts come from the other side of the world to get back to reality with uniforms, campsites — where army rations add that something extra — rain, discomfort, breakdowns . . . and a lot of fun.

Division assault and that of 6th Airborne Division. In the words of the tour preamble, the aim was 'to try to bring to life the atmosphere of war and to give students some idea of human reactions to the stress of battle'. Thorough briefings were given beforehand and one day was devoted to each battle, described by guest speakers who were there at the time from specific vantage points on the battlefield called stands.

Army units other than the Staff College have run their own tours from time to time, in fact I have before me the synopsis for one formulated by HQ 12 Mechanised Brigade for the Ardennes. Colonel John Green designed an Army tour for the Mareth Line and for the Cassino battlefield, the latter being presented to readers in issue 13, virtually unedited except for the customary: 'Good morning gentlemen.'

In the inter-war years, the old War Office were instrumental in publishing official battlefield tours and, if one can get hold of a copy, even now they make the most invaluable guides to the second type of tour — the individual one. To me nothing is better than having time to concentrate, to ponder, to visualise the past and to retrace a battle's development without distractions and, as readers will be aware, this is the sort of treatment I try to present in our magazine stories. The Army Council's First War tours were published by His Majesty's Stationery Office in the 1930s — the two in front of me, *Battle of Le Cateau* and *Battle of the Aisne*, appearing in 1934 and 1935 respectively. Each contains a descriptive narrative giving the background to each battle, detailed descriptions as seen from the individual stands, orders of battle and a pocket full of beautiful contemporary gridded maps — all for the price of 2s. 0d (10p)! However, the imprint indicates that only 2,500 of each were produced so they must be rare items today although they can no doubt be inspected in military museum libraries.

Even rarer are the BAOR tours for some Second War operations in Europe produced in hard-bound form in Germany in 1947 (covering *GOODWOOD, BLUECOAT, TOTALIZE, NEPTUNE, VERITABLE, PLUNDER,* and *VARSITY*). Only 700 of each volume were printed of which 150 were of a special expanded version for Directing Staff. However, I prefer the style of the highly-detailed Royal Engineers Battlefield Tours prepared under the direction of the Chief Engineer British Army of the Rhine. Naturally concentrating on the Engineers' task in war, Major General G. L. Watkinson had the first

volume *Normandy to the Seine* compiled by HQ 8 AGRE and published in July 1946. The two-volume follow up *The Seine to the Rhine* appeared the following February as 8 AGRE's swansong under Brigadier W. M. Broomhall. Each volume is complete with pull-out maps and readers have benefitted from the inclusion of some of these in past issues of *After the Battle* (for example issue 3, pages 14-15, and issue 16, pages 16-17).

The third form of battlefield visitation to have emerged is at what I can only describe as the 'junket' level. Usually originating from the United States, I am told by tour operators that it is obligatory to include free shopping days in London/Paris/Brussels/Amsterdam or wherever, and that an alternate itinerary has to be run in parallel for those ladies not wanting to stomp the battlegrounds with their menfolk. Four-star hotels are a must and apart from the well-known cemeteries and memorials, little time is available for the real nitty-gritty of the battle off the beaten track.

Finally comes the middle-of-the-road tour, and the type most likely to be encountered by our readers, like those on offer in the past by operators such as Captain Gordon, Galloways, P & O Travel, Summerfield or Major and Mrs. Tonie Holt, etc. Although when initially conceived the main emphasis of all the organisations still seemed to be on the First War or Napoleonic eras, Second War tours are now available. By far the market leader, with some fifteen different tours to choose from in their 1983 brochure, is that of the dynamic duo — Major Tonie Holt and his wife Valmai. Tonie explained to me that their involvement in battlefield tours began in much the same way that many wars do — almost by accident.

'It all started in 1976,' says Tonie, 'when we were having dinner with Philip Mellor, the managing director of Purnell's Military Book Club. Always innovative, Philip said that he was looking for ideas that he could use to provide additional benefits for Book Club members.

'Amongst the many proposals that were discussed, was that of offering an exclusive battlefield tour to members. Who it was that introduced the subject, none of us has ever been certain, but Philip was immediately

enthusiastic and instantly decided that if we would organise it, then he would promote it.

'At that stage I had been out of the Army for about four years, having resigned — not retired (an important distinction) after twenty years' service, straight from school. It had been a good career that suddenly became less attractive. There were many reasons for my disenchantment and amongst them was the prospect of the predictable years that lay ahead. For, having by then passed all the promotion and Staff examinations, my future was reasonably certain. There was also the generally narrow perspective of Army social life. The latter was something felt very strongly by Valmai, who found that intellectual stimulation was not an ingredient of the Service family environment.

'Thus I resigned my commission and we jointly set out to 'write' as a means of earning a living. It wasn't that simple of course, but it was through research for a book which was later entitled *Till the Boys Come Home* and taken by the Military Book Society, that we happened to be having dinner with Philip Mellor.

'During my Service career I had spent twelve months at the Command Staff College at Camberley in Surrey. It is just half a mile up the road from the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, where in 1951 I had gone as a cadet. In the Camberley year the whole course went on a battlefield tour to Normandy. The Staff course was an extremely demanding one, both from a professional standpoint and a social one. Long hard days at work were usually followed by long hard nights at play, and when in the middle of all this intensity there came an opportunity to take off to France, there was an almost euphoric reaction. Wives and children were left behind, and the soldiers went to play. Indeed, so great was the holiday feeling, that the trip was known not as a 'battlefield', but as a 'bottlefield' tour — an obvious reference to its major preoccupation — drinking.

'The Camberley Tour also involved much walking, talking and laughing. The reality of the combat did not intrude upon the good time that was had by all. This was despite the fact that the Camberley Directing Staff (known as "DS"), the Staff College teachers, had assembled ex-combatants from both sides to recount their adventures. Frequently these soldiers stood and talked to us students upon the ground where they as adversaries had fought in 1944 and 1945. At times it was gripping to hear their stories — but not often. So many times had they done their "turns" that it was natural for them to emphasise the parts of their stories that raised a laugh, and to drop the less attractive or less responsive bits. In any case, it is not wise to make serving soldiers truly appreciate what it is really like in war, because if they did understand, they would all resign.

'However, when Philip Mellor said, "Can you do a tour?", Valmai and I immediately said "Yes." We are both enthusiastic communicators, and Valmai had taught history and lectured on a variety of subjects. Since resigning from the Army we had developed strong connections in the travel business and both of us had a growing fascination with military history. We also had a degree of familiarity with the battlefields of both wars. And then there were the lessons of the bottlefield tour. Here was the opportunity of having an audience that would not be passive and obedient, but would respond to our direction only if it were satisfied with our performance. In short, it was a wonderful challenge — not the least in working as a male/female team to cover all aspects of war: life at home as well as at the front; propaganda as well as strategy — and to produce rounded commentaries that would interest women as well as men.

'That first Inaugural Tour, as we called it, asked a great deal of our travellers. They knew

Market leader of the organized battlefield coach tour at the present time in Great Britain is Major Tonie Holt who runs operations together with his wife Valmai, seen here before the Sherman at the St Mere Eglise museum in Normandy.

Tours cover all periods — from Waterloo in 1815, where Lieutenant General R. J. L. Dewandre is seen lecturing the party at Napoleon's eve-of-battle HQ, to Arnhem in 1944.

that it was our first venture, and they were marvellous. Many of them have travelled with us since and will travel again in 1983. In 1977 they all joined in with the adventure, and in their enthusiasm they established the pattern which we now maintain. Our basic proposition is that since there are roughly 10,000 soldiers to every Commanding General, then it is the soldiers who fight the wars, and not the generals. Thus we concern ourselves with the front line conditions of warfare and use every means available to us to bring those realities home to our travellers. The grander concepts of commanders and politicians are not ignored, but we see them only as colour washes to the foreground details of ordinary soldiering.

'Our Inaugural Tour was offered to members of the Military Book Society early in 1977. It covered five days in June. The itinerary included both World Wars and using our own coach throughout, the programme was: Day 1 — Ypres; Day 2 — Vimy; Day 3 — The Somme; Day 4 — Normandy/D-Day, US Sector; Day 5 — Normandy/D-Day, British Sector. The response was extraordinary, and every one of the fifty places available was taken. The great adventure was on.

'We wrote a detailed programme for the tour which covered every minute of the five days. We still do this. Every trip is special. As inveterate collectors, we had a great stock of WWI and WWII ration books, leave passes, newspapers and magazines, as well as a large library of period music. When the tour began we asked our travellers to join in the spirit of the enterprise, to suspend their 1970s attitudes and to exercise their imaginations in tune with the almost continuous commentaries which we had prepared. The coach was to become a time capsule.

'Our travellers did more than co-operate. They took part. WWI and WWII soldiers took the microphone and told their stories, the ladies spoke of the Blitz and rationing, and the youngsters heard their parents talk of things that they had never spoken of before. All of us were moved at the Last Post Ceremony at the Menin Gate in Ypres. All of us were amused when Normandy veteran, Harry Cooper, said that his worst memory of the war was watching his NAAFI wagon sink during the D-Day landings. We all became friends.

'There is an Army maxim that says "Any fool can be uncomfortable". Our daily itineraries are always packed full of activities and at the end of a busy day a good hotel is essential. Therefore we use good three and four star hotels wherever possible and dinner is always a great time to get into vigorous discussions about General Haig, Patton or Montgomery. . . .

'When the Inaugural Tour ended, our travellers bombarded us with ideas. "Why not split the tour into two and do WWI and WWII separately?" "Why not do Arnhem?" . . . and so on. Their suggestions were a spur to us then and remain so today. As a result of responding to demand, we ran over twenty tours in 1982 — Ypres, Somme, Verdun, Maginot Line, Ardennes, Normandy, Arnhem, Waterloo . . . even the American Civil War and the Confederate Air Force Show.

'1983 will be our seventh year of conducting battlefield tours. Now we act as military consultants to British Airways, Townsend Thoresen, Book Club Associates and Doubleday in New York. The Imperial War Museum, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the Royal British Legion frequently refer people to us. Our circle of new friends is constantly expanding. Their ages range from nine to ninety-two and they come alone, in pairs and even in families. As I have said, it is by no means a men-only domain. Valmai's presence and obviously equal involvement encourages ladies to feel that the tours are not merely for their men folk, but are designed for them too. We also have many ladies travelling singly, and an increasing number of Australians, New Zealanders and Americans.'

Miss Rose Coombs, MBE, acts as courier for Summerfields of Southampton. Her knowledge of the battlefields of Belgium and France, gained in years of study and hundreds of visits, is probably unsurpassed. Here she tells her group the story of the first and last casualties of the First World War — Private J. Parr *(foreground)*, **killed on August 21, 1914, and Private G. E. Ellison** *(rear row)* **on November 11, 1918. Both lie in the same cemetery at St. Symphorien near Mons in Belgium (Phil Burner).**

Our own author Miss Rose E. B. Coombs, MBE, since her retirement from the Imperial War Museum, is joining forces with Summerfield Hire Service who run five-day tours covering Ypres, Arras, Mons, the Somme and Compiegne, and also to Normandy. Participants are assured of the expertise of Miss Coombs with her formidable knowledge which she made use of in writing her guidebook *Before Endeavours Fade*. This indispensable addition to a battlefield tour of the Western Front of the Great War is once again available, in hardback or paperback, having now reached its fourth edition *(see centre leaflet)*.

My final word of advice, based on my own experience, is that the enjoyment of any visit to the battlefields is largely conditional on the amount of preparation done beforehand. One cannot expect to swot up at the last minute on the boat going over and the more pre-reading of the events, the more one will get out of an actual visit. I have had so many letters from readers telling of their frustration on returning from battlefields only to then find out what they missed.

For further details write to:

Mr and Mrs Holt's Tours,
Oak House,
Woodnesborough,
Sandwich, Kent

Galloway Travel,
31 Market Hill,
Sudbury, Suffolk
(Galloway concentrate mainly on school parties but can organise tours for groups.)

P & O Flag Travel,
Beaufort House,
St. Botolph Street,
London, EC3A 7DX
(Courier: Lyn Macdonald)

Summerfield Hire Service,
247 Aldermoor Road,
Southampton.
(Courier: Rose E. B. Coombs, MBE)

Rogan Tours in conjunction with Kinch's Coaches,
72 Gipsy Lane,
Nuneaton,
Warwickshire, CV11 4SE
(Courier: Bill Rogan)

It's only natural that wives and girl friends are not always as enthusiastic for militaria and all that goes with it yet Jerry Hillyard seems to have struck it rich with Julie at their home in Denver, Colorado. In February 1982, Robert Bechman, a Las Vegas muralist, completed a four-week commission which resulted in the second Schweinfurt mission of October 14, 1943 being flown across Jerry's dining room wall. Murals were part and parcel of the Eighth Air Force (see issue 30) and it was Jerry's desire to bring the nostalgia of the 1940s into his home in the 1980s. The aircraft are all authentic 94th BG machines (except for *Rosie Dosie* named after Jerry's French poodle) and depict the scene at 1300 hours over Antwerp en route for Germany. This was the first war mural completed by the artist, also his largest in a private house (12ft x 25ft — the mural not the house), and he believes it is possibly the only one in the US with a battle mural. Readers interested in bettering this can contact the artist through Julie at 3840 South Dahlia Street, Denver, Colarado 80237.

In the same vein, John Waters of Cannock, Staffordshire, sent us a photo of his Ford Escort complete with aircraft-style camouflage! 'Having seen the photograph you must be wondering what the devil it is all about', wrote John. 'Well, the fact is that I have always had an insatiable interest in World War II and have spent my life reading books, studying maps and photographs, drawing and painting pictures and making and painting models of that period, and I suppose it was inevitable that one day I would turn my artistic talents upon the car. I hasten to add that this is only a second car which runs me about for work, otherwise my wife would never have let me do it. Since the photograph was taken I have painted aircraft on the car and when the light nights and warmer weather returns I shall continue with my task'.

Incidentally Jerry raised a point which had come up in a conversation he had had with a lady who had been living in Schweinfurt as a young girl of ten or eleven during the wartime raids. She had been evacuated to the country where she helped with the potato harvest. She told Jerry that she remembered being told that the crop had been ruined by the Colorado beetle which her parents said had been dropped from Allied bombers.

Consequently I raised the point with Roger Freeman, whose studies of the Eighth Air Force are well known. Roger replied: 'I can say quite definitely that such an operation was never carried out by the Eighth Air Force. Quite simply it just wouldn't be on as the beetles would have frozen at high altitude. The idea was certainly one of many put forward during the war but discarded because it was completely impractical. For it to succeed, plant growth, weather and the reproduction cycle of the beetle would have to coincide and was certainly asking a lot of nature.' And Roger is a farmer so he should know!

'Brennan's Circus', the leading B-17 commanded by Lieutenant Joseph Brennan, has just lost an engine in a factual recreation of the Schweinfurt raid — now being fought again in this dining room in Denver, Colorado.

Escorting the raid — John Waters of Cannock, Staffordshire.

A revealing account of the story behind the photograph of the Rangers at Pointe du Hoc in Normandy came from Igor de Lissovoy of Indian Lakes Estate, Florida.

'Not many know just what is happening in that famous photo on page 38 of your first issue. The Rangers in this photo are giving aid to their wounded who unfortunately have been killed and wounded by our own tanks that came from Omaha Beach. Having captured several Schmeissers, they were using them on the Germans, but when our men heard the firing, which is quite different from our .45 calibers, they thought that the Germans were still resisting and opened fire on the Rangers. Take a look at this photo. See the Ranger on the extreme left sitting down and facing the camera? His name is Lou Lisko and he was the radio operator. He is now Ranger Historian and used to be a barber by

THE COMMANDING GENERAL, PROVISIONAL ENGINEER SPECIAL BRIGADE GROUP USED THIS GERMAN EMPLACEMENT ON 6 JUNE 1944 AS PART OF THE INITIAL HEADQUARTERS FOR THE ORGANIZATION AND OPERATION OF OMAHA BEACH.
IN MEMORY OF OUR COMRADES WHO HERE GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR FREEDOM THROUGHOUT THE WORLD THIS MEMORIAL IS DEDICATED.

Left: **Lou Lisko revisits the Ranger's CP at Pointe du Hoc — see issue No. 1 page 38. With him is the President of the Grandcamp Chamber of Commerce, M. Robert Ravelet.** *Above:* **An unusually different way of bringing back a life-size souvenir from the battlefields — a rubbing from the new plaque on the bunker on page 31 of issue 1, thanks to Beth Barr.**

A LA MEMOIRE DU ST./SGT.
DE LA 90e DIV D'INF. U.S.
HASSEL C. WHITEFIELD
QUI SACRIFIA SA VIE LE 17.1.45
EN ESSAYANT DE SAUVER CELLE
DE L'ENFANT MARCEL SCHILLING
DEDIE PAR CEBA

CEBA — dedicated to remembering the past. Memorial *left*, to the 80th US Infantry Division, unveiled at Heiderscheid in 1976, and *right* another by the brother of Sergeant Hassel Whitefield who died at Oberwampach.

profession but now he is in charge of security at some steel company. One time, he told me, a stranger came in to get a haircut. When he came back again the subject of conversation turned to WWII. It was then that they discovered to their amazement that the stranger was radio operator on destroyer *Satterlee* with whom Lisko communicated during the assault on the cliffs!

'Another fascinating comparison is on page 31 of the same issue. The fort in the lower right corner had a bronze plate lying on the ground below the muzzle of the gun. I found that this plaque was partially covered by gravel, debris and miscellaneous junk. I suggested to Washington that something more appropriate could be done. Imagine my surprise when I discovered on my last trip that the plaque was moved and affixed to the side of this fort, that a beautiful black marble memorial had been erected next to it facing the Channel, and entrances to this fort were sealed with iron fence so that no one could use it as a latrine.'

The Cercle d'études sur la Bataille des Ardennes (CEBA for short) was formed in 1972 with the express purpose of bringing together those interested in the Battle of the Bulge and in establishing a documentation centre and museum. To this end contacts are made by CEBA with former soldiers of both sides and receptions have been held for retiring US veterans (twenty organised to date). The museum is in being in the castle at Clervaux and, so far, five memorials have been constructed by CEBA dedicated to divisions which fought in the area, as well as the mounting of a plaque on General Patton's old HQ in Luxembourg (see issue 35, page 24). Their most ambitious project to date is to commission and erect a monument to the GI, and a classic statue is in course of construction and will stand at Clervaux. The group publishes a magazine *The Bulge* and further details can be obtained from Mme Tilly Kimmes, 29 rue de Hunsdorf, Steinsel, Luxembourg.

The Le Paradis massacre (issue 15) ran to its sad conclusion in February 1982 with the death of Albert Pooley, the last remaining survivor (the other, Bill O'Callaghan, died in November 1975). Having withstood forty-seven operations and the amputation of both legs to help mitigate the effects of his wounds of May 27, 1940, he died shortly after his 70th birthday. British Legion standard bearers attended the funeral at Hanwell Crematorium in west London. Bert's last wish was that his ashes would be scattered in the British war cemetery at Le Paradis where his ninety-seven dead comrades are buried. However French law forbids the scattering of ashes and, exceptionally, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission allowed their burial in the cemetery at an unmarked spot. This last act was carried out on June 7 by the Dunkirk Veterans' Association coincident with their annual service in France. Present in the group for the first time were four men from the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Norfolks who had been captured by a unit not commanded by SS-Obersturmbannfuehrer Knoechlein.

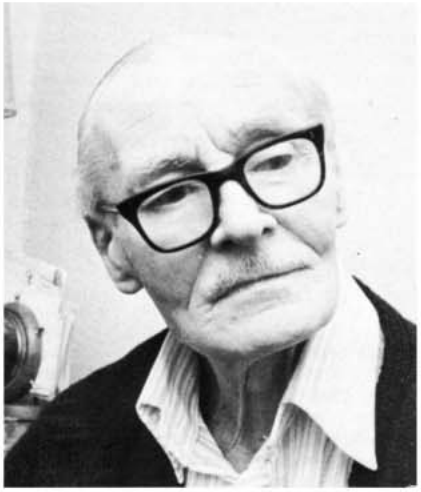
'Having just returned from holiday in Normandy, and being an avid fan of *After the Battle*, I felt I just had to write to you,' wrote Mr. N. J. Dawe of Abingdon, Oxfordshire.

'I spent the holiday naturally visiting most of the battle zones and villages featured in ATB No. 1 which I bought, incidentally, in Arromanches the last time we visited France, not having seen the magazine before in England.

'The two real highlights of the trip to me, was visiting Lingevres and trying to reproduce, as you do, the original photos, and also visiting the main exit road from Mike Sector, Juno Beach at Graye-sur-Mer, where the Churchill AVRE was recovered after all those years. To see the old lady restored, and to identify the site of her 'grave' from your fantastic photos and story in ATB No. 15 really brought a lump to my throat!

'I was however, saddened at the site of this moving monument being used as a "climbing frame" for all the children of families holidaying in this historic area. I had to wait for over half an hour to be able to photograph the AVRE without swarms of kids all over it, and my wife had to ask innumerable parents and children to keep clear whilst I got some shots from different angles. Luckily she speaks some French!

'While the French Army engineers have done an incredible restoration job, I feel some sort of barrier ought to be provided to keep the hoards of children at a respectable (and respectful) distance, so that it can be photographed and to prevent this vehicle getting to the sad state of some of the external exhibits at Bovington Tank Museum. I have read much of the "fanatical Hitler Youth" teenagers holding up whole divisions of



Bert Pooley — after so many years of suffering — his last wish honoured.

infantry and armour, but looking at this sad sight at Graye and Bovington, feel sure that if the Wehrmacht had employed the average five to twelve-year-olds of today to destroy the Allied armour, the outcome of WWII may have been different! Also, some form of plaque at the site of the AVRE, explaining the circumstances of her being there surely would not go amiss. It might even make some of the parents think.'

In response to Mr Dawe's letter and other requests from readers regarding the condition of the restored AVRE at Graye, see pages 26-27. (Note: I avoided the children by getting up early!)

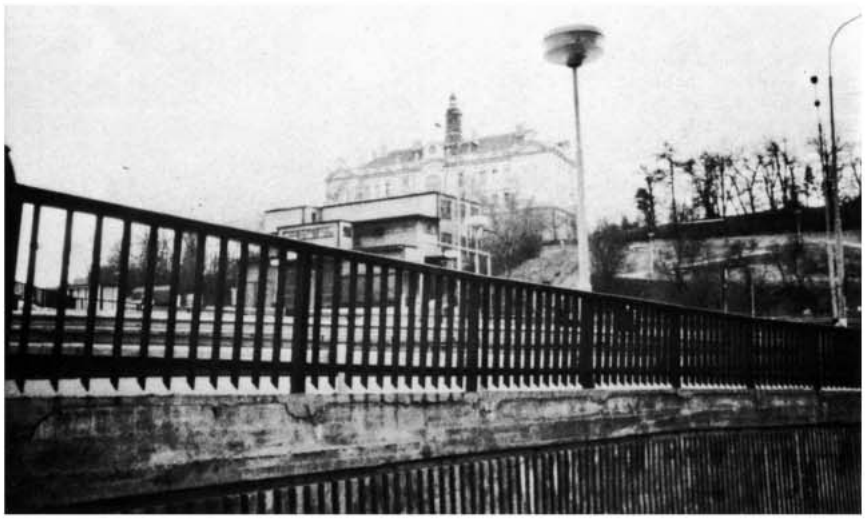
A very interesting follow up to the Heydrich story in issue 24 came from author Frederick Nolan.

'Just returned from a trip to Munich-Prague-Berlin, I thought you might like an update on your Heydrich assassination number and the follow up letters on the site of his grave. To begin with, your then-now photos of the assassination site have become historical documents: the entire corner has been completely restructured. The former hairpin bend has been altogether eliminated, and the new road turning right goes from the corner of Gabcikova to the gateway of the factory. The gardens, railings, etc, have vanished. Likewise, the entire junction and the houses which stood on it have gone, to be replaced by a still-building flyover junction. The site of the assassination attempt, as far as I could judge it by the still-existing dilapidated building opposite and the 'research centre' (actually a hospital) on the crown of the hill, is now marked by a bus shelter. Everything else has gone, not least the old cobblestones and tramlines. For those, one has to return to the Rude armady. Even Kubisova is closed off from the main Holesovickach. The other landmarks — the church in Resslova, the plaque outside the Novak house, and so on — remain unchanged.

'In Berlin-East, the Invalidenfriedhof, or Veteran's Cemetery, is not the same as the Friedhof der Sophien-Kirche Gemeinde. The former is to the north of the University of Medicine faculty, the former Charity Hospital. It used to lie at the foot of the Army Medical School, and is now a neglected spot only two-thirds of which may be inspected due to its proximity to the Wall. About a mile away, perhaps a little more, lies the FdSKG at Bergstrasse, near the old Nordbahnhof. It was here Anne Lanigan found Heydrich's grave (*issue 31, page 4*). That, too, no longer exists as such. The site of the grave is marked only by some scattered granite bordering stones, covered with sand and building debris. All graves not 'claimed' by the families of burials prior to 1957 are being recycled. The distinctive railing and the birch trees are the only way to locate the spot, and I doubt the railings will last much longer.'

'The article on the death of the Duke of Kent (issue 37) reached me on August 25 — the anniversary of the crash', wrote Mr R. M. Jones of Port Talbot. 'Once again I felt that I was making that journey to the memorial at Eagle Rock to pay my respects to the crew and, of course, especially to my only brother, Flight Sergeant W. R. Jones whose name is inscribed on the memorial. I was most fortunate when my wife and I visited Berriedale as I had previously written to the present Duke of Kent requesting details of the memorial and access to it. I found from him that the Duchess of Portland had laid on a guide and snowcat to transport us right up to the memorial. We were most grateful.

For many years I have naturally been deeply interested in any aspects of information on this crash and I obtained copies of the Court of Inquiry report which of course said very little. Flight Sergeant Andrew (Andy) Jack (later Flight Lieutenant), the only survivor, was a close friend of my brother and visited



It's a never-ending battle to try to cover situations before they are swept away. Sometimes we lose, as with the chateau used for the Slovik execution (issue 32); others we win as evidenced by Fred Nolan's pictures of 'assassination corner' in Prague. See how different the story might have been by comparing these pictures with issue 24: *above* with that on page 10 and *below* the picture on page 13.

my home in South Wales when the squadron was at Pembroke Dock. My mother and him were close friends as they were both based near to each other in Grangemouth. Over the years I have tried to contact Andy Jack. Once, when visiting his home in Grangemouth, I missed him by a hair's breadth when he left to live in Cheltenham. In 1981 I received confirmation from the Air Ministry that he had died in March 1980.

'I am glad that Mr Smith in his article discounts so much of the "bovine excreta" that has been written about the crash and its causes and gives his own very valid theory. I believe that the only reason they hit Eagle Rock is that they still thought they were over the sea. The weather over the land was in fact shocking and no pilot of Goyen's undoubted ability would have taken a short cut to save fuel. Remember he had at least five hours of spare fuel and a diversion would be given to him in plenty of time. Andy Jack, in one report I read, did say that he was told to keep visual contact with the coast which would be (from the rear turret) on his right-hand side, and his last memory was of glimpsing land on his left-hand side. This meant that a nearly 90^{o} turn had been made without the pilot informing the crew, who would still all be at action stations, that they were leaving the sea route. Is it possible that after leaving the Moray Firth and clearing Tarbat Ness, that a new but incorrect course had been set and that a "red on blue" condition existed and that the aircraft was coming round on a reciprocal — a condition that until that type of compass was modified was not uncommon. Group Captain Cheshire, VC, admits in his autobiography that he was guilty of it. Roy Nesbit devotes quite a bit of space to it in his book *Woe to the Unwary*. He quotes a case where a pilot bombed off the Irish coast instead of Brest and states he was a very inexperienced pilot. Not quite true, as I knew him, an ex-Regular Sergeant Pilot DFM who had just been commissioned, now long dead, killed in a flying accident at RAF Netheravon. The point I make is that an experienced pilot full of confidence could easily make this mistake. No doubt there was an air of light-heartedness on the flight deck as certain jollifications had taken place as befit such visits. The Duke of Kent and his party had spent the night before his arrival at Invergordon, at RAF Lossiemouth. To the crew of 228 Squadron this was a welcome break from the relative grind of Atlantic patrols. Was there too much "scrambled egg" on the flight deck that day so that concentration wavered? No Court of Inquiry would have ever promulgated a finding that the heir to the throne was killed because someone set a compass wrongly. I only theorise such because of my belief that the crew thought they were still over the sea.

'Andy Jack survived because there were two impacts. The first on Eagle Rock which tore off the tail and rear turret, the passage of which through the deep heather set the

hydraulic oil alight causing the burns he suffered besides other injuries. The impact turned the Sunderland over and the second impact exploded the depth-charges. Anyone who has visited Eagle Rock can only marvel at the guts and tenacity of Andy in seeking help, burned and badly injured as he was. Why no decorations?

'On my visit to Berriedale my wife and I motored up to Inverness, arriving there just in time to book into a small guest house at nightfall. The proprietress, when she found out where we were bound, brought her husband in to see us. He (lucky chap) worked then in the local whisky distillery but during the war belonged to an Army unit which was called the "Oxen Unit". This was a front for a unit that toured the Highlands instructing selected civilians on how to lay charges and blow up strategic bridges if and when necessary. The front was that they were touring the Highlands listing all cattle in case of a meat shortage. He told us he was at Berriedale at the time of the crash showing how charges should be laid to blow up the bridge over the A9. The weather he said was so bad that the search party could not leave Berriedale until about midday the next day — my evidence for my previous statement that the weather was shocking. (By a strange coincidence in the morning before we left I noticed that the name of the guest house was "Royston". My brother's name was William Royston but always called Roy.)

'It was indeed a very emotional moment for me that day to walk through the heather to the cross. It is so easy to be affected by the great beauty of the hills and the silence that surrounds them and to remember those that you knew, now only names on a granite plinth. Besides my brother, I knew Leonard Sweett, an apprentice in my entry at Halton in 1937, and Norman Lewis with whom my brother and I had gone on a pub crawl a year before. No doubt the sceptical will say that the cheerful voices I heard that day were only the wind ruffling the long grass, the cry of a bird, and the trickle of a small burn. When my wife and I returned to Helmsdale late in the day I could see she seemed a bit upset. I asked her why and she said she had heard voices, a laugh and a voice saying "Its OK Skipper" — one of the things I believe that I heard. Probably more "bovine excreta". I wonder if David Smith, in the silence there, felt still the presence of brave men.

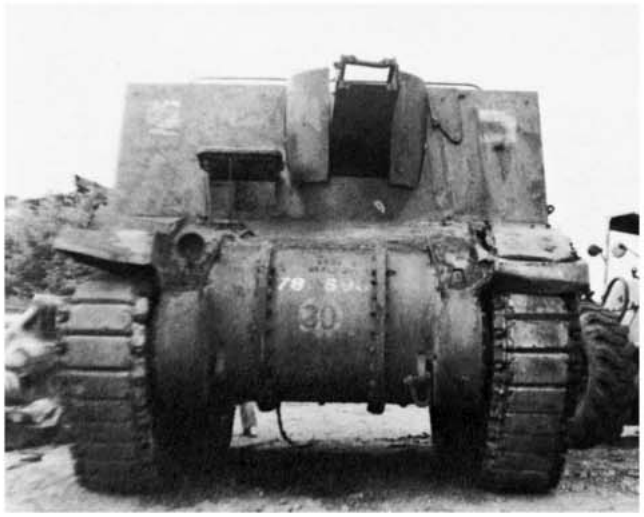
'Most of the photographs in my possession of the crash site are duplicated but I am taking the liberty of enclosing a photograph of the crew. For my part I am deeply grateful for the type of article in your magazine that in your own way paid respect to such men and sees that they are not forgotten.'

The crew of Sunderland W4026 on the fatal flight. Flight Sergeant Andy Jack is standing (second from left) next to Flight Sergeant Roy Jones (third from left). Others positively identified are Flight Sergeant Lewis (standing far right), Flight Lieutenant Goyen (seated centre) and Flight Sergeant Hewerdine (seated right).

Issue 37 also featured the scrapyard of Pounds Shipbreakers at Portsmouth. The Sexton on page 24 found a new home in Canada and a nice set of photographs of its restoration arrived from William Gregg of the Canadian Military Historical Society. The society is also publisher of three excellent volumes recording military vehicles in the Canadian sphere: *Canada's Fighting Vehicles, Canadian Military Vehicle Profiles* and *Blueprint for Victory*. For further details write to the society at RR2, Rockwood, Ontario, NOB 2KO, Canada.

Although in issue 17 I included a feature on German prisoners of war in England, four times the number of prisoners in the UK found themselves in the United States. Officially 425,000 Axis prisoners were shipped to America where they were sent to any one of 501 camps scattered across the country. The majority returned home after the war but 995 still lie buried in the United States, having died from illness, suicide or attempting to escape. Each year a delegation from the West

The grave of a German prisoner of war, who died in America, is honoured at Fort Meade, Maryland.



The Sexton purchased by Bill Gregg was found on arrival to be an early production model converted to Sexton II configuration in the field (Jeff Theobald).

Shipped to snowy Canada, it was restored to running order by Stu Robertson, complete with weaponry. Bill Gregg stands top left front.

German embassy in Washington pays homage to those who never returned to the Fatherland in a ceremony at Fort Meade, Maryland where thirty-four lie buried. Of the 13,000 wartime prisoners in Maryland, most of whom ended up working on farms, naval commander Werner Henke was the first to die — shot while trying to escape on June 15, 1944. The last was Heinz Saack, a 23-year-old private who died of tuberculosis on July 4, 1947. In between were five suicides, one the day after Germany surrendered, and, altogether, twenty-seven men out of the total died after the war had ended.

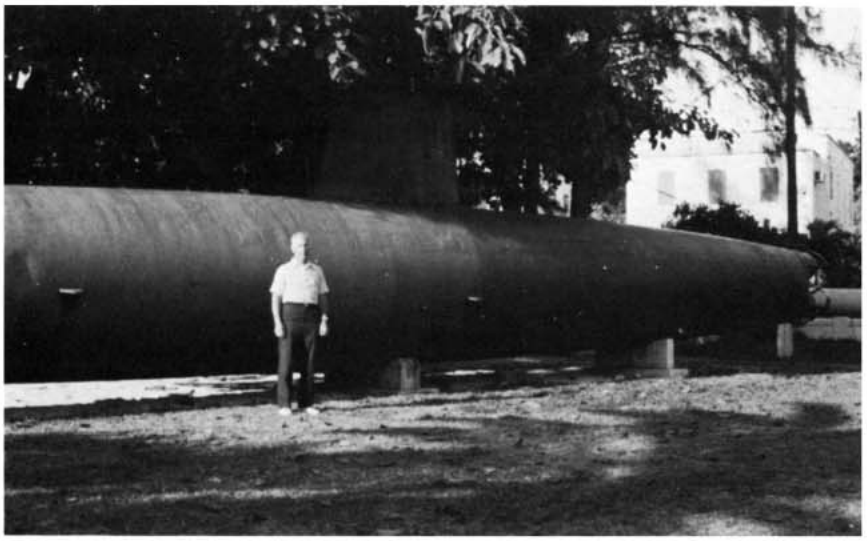
The midget submarine which came ashore near Bellows (page 14, issue 38) is currently on display at Key West in Florida and it was interesting to read that an organisation has just been formed to sponsor its return to Pearl Harbor as part of the Arizona Memorial. (Supporters of the project should write to Charles L. Jackson, 3806 Woodridge Avenue, Wheaton, Maryland 20902 or Kaye A. Jordan, 1511 Nuuanu Avenue, 99 Honolulu, Hawaii 96817.)

The *Lady Be Good* story was the subject of James Walker's letter to me from Phoenix, Arizona. Referring to page 44 of issue 31, readers will see the photograph I included of the wreck taken by Wing Commander Lane in 1967. This showed the tail section in a different position to the photos in the original story (issue 25) and I speculated as to who might have moved it. Now Mr. Walker has solved the mystery for us.

'In the early 1960s, I headed a project at McDonnell-Douglas concerned with the long-term aging effects of hostile environments on aerospace materials. During this program, with the exceptional co-operation of the RAF Desert Rescue Team stationed at El Adem, Libya, a wide range of materials and components from the *Lady* were recovered for laboratory study. In response to our request, the DRT made a ten-day overland expedition to the crash site through largely unmapped areas of the Libyan Desert. In addition to recovering a large number of lesser components, the team returned with the intact No. 2 engine now on display at the USAF Museum.

'All of us who had the opportunity to study the recovered components from the B-24 were quite astounded over their degree of preservation. Indeed, following removal of large amounts of ingested sand, we found the engine entirely functional without replacement of parts.

'The DRT expedition took place in April 1968. Considering the political events which took place in Libya immediately afterward, I assumed this was fated to be the last forseeable Anglo visit to the wreckage site.



Charles Jackson would like to see the Japanese midget submarine, which was beached at Bellows and is currently displayed at the Military Musuem at Key West, returned to the islands.

However, I noted in your No. 31 issue reference to a 1980 visit by an individual from the USA. At that juncture, it was noted that the separated aft fuselage of the B-24 was found to have been aligned with the forward sections by unknown parties. From conversations with the DRT leader, Squadron Leader A. P. Zeleny, I was advised that this "reconstruction" was done by the DRT who, upon their arrival, found the aft fuselage nearly a quarter mile from the main wreckage. It had been dragged there apparently by one of the many oil exploration groups operating in that area of Libya during the 1960s.

'The mystery of the buried .50 caliber ammunition, cited by the 1980 visitor, is also easily resolved. In 1959, during the first visit to the *Lady Be Good*, Major W. F. Rubertus, USAF, concerned about the potential hazard of the ammunition aboard the B-24, buried the live .50 caliber rounds under the starboard wing. Over the past twenty years, it appears that the sand/gravel surface has eroded to the point of exposing the ammunition to the surprise of the 1980 visitor.

'His trepidation over taking examples of the .50 caliber rounds as souvenirs (or hopefully for ultimate museum display) due to the well-publicized *Lady Be Good* 'jinx' is largely illusory. Since completion of the McDonnell-Douglas evaluation, the components returned by the DRT (totaling some 300 lbs, exclusive of the No. 2 engine) have been in my possession and, happily, no untoward "incidents" have occured in the interim.

'Indeed, research into each of the media reported calamities associated with other components recovered from the B-24 all had plausible explanations. Those of us who have been close to the investigation of this tragic incident from WWII lament that Press accounts invariably found it necessary to hype the true facts, which we have always regarded as sufficiently remarkable in themselves.'

Best tailpiece of late concerns actor Roy Dotrice who served in the Royal Air Force as an air gunner and was a prisoner of war from 1942-45. His latest role is portraying Winston Churchill in a stage play at Ford's Theatre, Washington, DC. It is difficult now to separate fact from fiction where the many humorous anecdotes associated with Churchill are concerned (especially if they involve Lady Astor) but the following which appears in the show was vouched for by a doctor in Stratford on Avon, formerly a colonel in the RASC. The doctor had been sent with a group to Norway to teach the soldiers there how to use the Sten. They found that the only way to keep the barrel of the gun from freezing and backfiring was to put a contraceptive over the end. A special 22-inch version was ordered specially from the British firm (which shall be nameless) which had to get permission for the unusual equipment from Churchill. He agreed they could be made on two conditions: first they be stamped 'British Made' and second that they be stamped 'Medium Size'.

The things readers send me. These pictures came from a Dutch gentleman of items recovered from the B-24 which crashed on December 22, 1943 in the IJsselmeer (see issue 12, page 33).

Unofficial recovery of aircraft parts is forbidden in the Netherlands due to the presence of munitions and human remains. Some human remains? The things those Yanks took with them!